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The **Cut Flower**

Q U A R T E R L Y

Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers Inc.

for growers of field and greenhouse specialty cuts



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Cover photo courtesy of Julie Raymond
Flowers featured include: Cosmos, rose 'Combo', rose 'State of Grace', dahlia 'Jowey Nicky', pennycress, jasmine, rose 'Black Beauty', chrysanthemum, sweet pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*), white meadowsweet (*Spirea alba*), ranunculus, butterfly ranunculus, preserved beech, seeded eucalyptus, and spiral eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus cinerea*).



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Our time is growing short: I'll meet you in St. Louis.

Val Schirmer

Have you ever decided on a specific course of action, finished up your research, walked through how it will go in your mind...and then decided to go another way? That's what I did last night. What you're going to read in my column is not what I'd planned to write about.

Until last night, I'd had been pulling together my notes from two of the excellent farm tours I've gone to so far this summer—Jenny Marks' Trademarks Flower Farm, and Jessica Hall and crew's Harmony Harvest Farm.

I feel there's SO much value for anyone (regardless of where you are in your flower journey) who goes to a farm tour—from the sheer FUN of hanging out with the flower farming tribe, to learning in person how the hosts are building their unique business models, to seeing their processes and systems in action, plus I always take home a few tricks or farm hacks to try out, and that's what I've been preparing to write about.

But then something happened, and I decided to go another way with this column.

What happened was last night's monthly Board check-in Zoom call.

First up on the agenda was an update from John Dole on the Executive Director Search. The application period closed August 11 and we learned

that more than 100 people have applied for the role. Wow! That's when it really sank in: this is actually going to happen, and SOON. Judy will be leaving us.

By the time we kick off our National Conference on November 6, our executive search consultant will have screened all those resumés and cover letters and conducted initial virtual interviews to begin narrowing down the list. The Search Committee (John Dole, Mimo Davis, Erin McMullen, and Susan Rockwood) will have done Zoom interviews with their top candidates to narrow it down even further and then John and I (with the Board on Zoom) will do the final in-person interviews in Oberlin, AND we will have extended an offer to the person who, by the end of 2023, will become just our second Executive Director in the ASCFG's 35-year history, and Judy Laushman, who has held this instrumental role since its inception in 1988, will retire as the year closes out.

It's a huge understatement to say our organization would not (could not) be where it is today without Judy at its helm every step of the way. No one else has been in a leadership role through the ASCFG's 35-year journey.

I still have the letter she sent me on July 6, 2000, when I first joined the ASCFG—and I imagine many of you do as well. Right after that I received the brochure about the 2000

National Conference and Trade Show Oct. 4 - 7 in Austin, Texas, hosted by Frank and Pamela Arnosky. And I immediately signed up.

I first met Judy at the registration table, as I checked in for the Growers' School and Conference. I'd been growing for only two years, was not doing a good job at it, and had never attended any kind of flower farming event. I was wildly excited, more than a little nervous, and hopeful that I'd be able to understand enough to learn from what I was about to experience.

Judy was kind, patient, completely organized and professional—and immediately made me feel welcome. She made me feel like I was the most important person in the world.

At that point I had no idea that along with all of her other duties and responsibilities as Executive Director of the ASCFG (plus the Research Foundation when it was formed in 2004), she was also Editor of *The Cut Flower Quarterly*, which is also celebrating its 35th year of publication. How does she make it all look so easy?

This will be Judy's final Quarterly as its Editor

As the team began drafting the Executive Director job posting, we quickly realized we'd never be able to find a new Executive Director who would have demonstrated experi-





Left: Jessica Hall's Harmony Harvest Farm tour. Right: Robin Siktberg in her favorite environment — a garden.

ence in board governance, financial oversight, mission and strategy execution, organizational operations, human resources, communications, and external relations — as well as be able to excel, as Judy has, as the *Quarterly's* Editor.

We asked her to lead the process to find an excellent independent contractor who could take on what she has so aptly done for so many years. And of course, Judy, Linda Twining (Operations Director), and Rebecca Marrall (Education Director) have done just that in hiring Robin Siktberg, our new *Quarterly* editor.

Robin has a long and established history in the floriculture industry. Robin started at the Cleveland Botanical Garden and then The Herb Society of America, which gives her relevant experience with non-profit organizations. She has been a frequent contributor to industry publications and most recently has been a regular writer for and editor

of *Greenhouse Grower* magazine, where she worked closely with Allan Armitage, one of her recommenders.

Robin and Judy have worked in tandem on this issue of the *Quarterly*, and Robin will assume full responsibility for the Winter 2024 edition. I have no doubts that Judy is leaving us in capable hands.

But it's hard to comprehend that this will be Judy's final National Conference.

Since that first Conference for me in Austin, followed in 2001 with the one in San Diego and 2002 in Madison, Wisc., I've seen her greet many thousands of growers (often alongside Linda Twining, who came on board in 2002), always with a kind and generous smile, completely organized and professional—and immediately making each one instantly feel welcome, or welcomed back, like he or she is the most important person in the world.

I know there are a lot of our long-time members coming to St. Louis expressly to see Judy, to share a few special memories, a hug, handshake or pat on the back and wish her SO MUCH happiness as she heads into the next phase of her life, where she and Roger can travel anytime, anywhere they'd like, and be with loved ones all over the country.

I can't wait for St. Louis and the chance to celebrate the ASCFG's milestone alongside Judy's 35 years of caring, educating, supporting and uniting our flower farming community.

It will be a treat for every single one of us.

Val Schirmer is founder of Three Toads Farm, Winchester, Kentucky.

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Summertime in England

Ellen Frost and Laura Beth Resnick



LB is off this summer, so I'm writing on my own. In mid-July, I had the opportunity to travel to England for the first time. Whenever I travel, I try to incorporate flower adventures. I glommed onto a family trip which made my time for flowers limited—I made the most of it!

The main stop on my trip was to Bournemouth, a small beach town in Dorset along the southern coast. I googled flower farmers in Bournemouth and found Brothers Farm Flowers, a flower and blueberry farm about 10 miles from where I was staying. I was lucky to be visiting during blueberry season when the farm is open to visitors. I sent an Instagram message introducing myself and letting Dan, the flower farmer, know I'd love to come visit.

My first stop upon arriving at the farm was the café and farm store housed in a charming old barn. After a cappuccino and blueberry coffee cake (made with the farm's blueberries) I toured the flower fields. I felt right

at home among the dahlias, scabiosa, rudbeckia, and echinops. The only difference was the cool English air. I planned my visit so I could attend the farm's free weekly seasonal sustainable floral design demo in their studio. It was so fun to watch Becca, the in-house florist, demonstrate foam-free methods of design using flowers from the farm.

I also had a chance to talk with Dan, the flower farmer and owner, about his business model. He has created a rare flower destination. He's able to accommodate visitors seasonally primarily due to the blueberries—his brother's venture. Their "pick your own bluebs" events in addition to the café, yoga in the flower fields, and workshops produce income without interfering with their primary wholesale and florist business. We also discussed the challenges we share with running seasonal businesses—staffing, flower availability, and cash flow.

Farm visits are such a fun way to meet flower friends, learn about flowers, and expand the possibilities of your business.



Outdoor cafe seating and flower fields at Brothers Farm Flowers in Bournemouth, England.

Columbia Road Flower Market

I was able to spend a few days in London on this trip. As a flower lover visiting England, there is no place better to be on a Sunday morning than the Columbia Road Flower Market. Located in London's East End neighborhood of Bethnal Green, an eight-block stretch of Columbia Road bustles each week with flower traders. Many of these traders have been selling flowers at this market for their entire lives, just as their parents and grandparents did. England, like the U.S., imports most of their cut flowers, though, here, the Netherlands is the biggest foreign supplier. Locally-grown flowers were sparse but proudly identified with British origin labels. I recognized most varieties though some had different names. I was also introduced to a few flowers I had never seen before. With some shopping and treats along Columbia Road, it was the perfect flower day.

This market is dedicated to flowers, and there are a lot of them. The vendors are called traders, not growers, so this is not a farmers' market. Most of the cut flowers were imported. There were also a wide variety of other natural ornamental products: succulents, potted plants, herbs, and dried flowers. There were many flowers that I regularly sell in my shop like lavender and dahlias. I was pleased to encounter *Sanguisorba* for the first time which looked like little raspberries on a long stem. I also came across a familiar looking flower called chin chin, but I couldn't place it. I later looked it up—Star of Bethlehem, but these stems were bloomed up to the top. My growers sell them with the top blooms closed.

Along Columbia Road there are little shops, boutiques and, of course, pubs that make a trip to Bethnal Green a complete destination. My favorite shop was In Bloom which had vases, pots, ceramics, and terra-cotta spilling out of its tiny storefront into the road. Inside, every shelf was crowded with more hand-crafted vessels ready to fill with flowers in addition to other crafty products. I picked up a couple of notebooks—easy to pack and you can never have enough.

I had never heard of Columbia Road before arriving in London but a quick Google search for flowers in London led me to one of my favorite stops on the trip.

Kew Gardens

One of the deciding factors in going to England was the chance to go to Kew Gardens. It was my last day in England and I didn't have nearly as much time as I wanted to explore. Kew has the largest and most diverse botanical collection in the world. It requires multiple days, maybe weeks, of explora-



Ellen at the Columbia Road Flower Market.

tion. Plus, it was a typical London day with rain threatening. So, I planned my own greatest hits tour: The Great Broad Walk, The Palm House, The Rose Garden, The Waterlily House, and The Temperate House. This was a full plate with not much time allotted at each destination. Resigned knowing I would only cover a small amount of the garden, I was off.

As soon as I walked through Elizabeth Gate, I was in awe of the expansive views of floral attractions awaiting me on all sides. It was massive. The garden is "hidden" in the borough of Richmond upon Thames. Walking through the gate felt like how an architect uses expansion by compression, but on the scale of a neighborhood. I was walking down a typical street (compression) and then through the gate into another world (expansion). Like when Charlie first enters the chocolate factory, but for flowers.

The Great Broad Walk, one of the main arteries of the garden, is a wide, paved path with thousands of



flowers and herbs lining the way. It was a riot of color. Most of the flowers were recognizable to me including echinops, alstroemeria, scabiosa, and crocosmia. Some varieties I had never seen before and still haven't identified. My memory of the experience was that all of the flowers were super-sized. The cardoon were taller than me. The salvia was enormous. My mind could be exaggerating. It was overwhelming. I could have spent the entire visit just exploring this path.

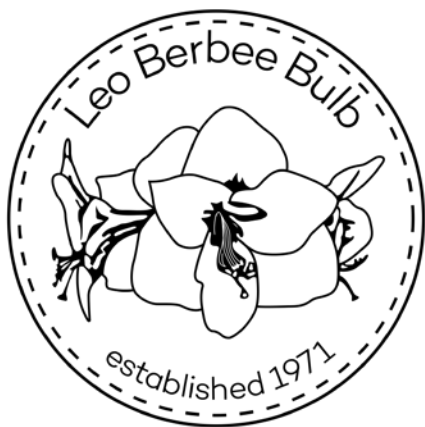
The Broad Walk diverged into an impossible decision: The Palm House, The Rose Garden, or The Waterlily House. I had planned on all three, and time was short, so let's just go! The Palm House is 180 years old. It looks like something from a vintage postcard. The building that housed all those palms was like an antique vase that enhances the arrangement. The Rose Garden was in full bloom. I smelled as many as I could and captured some photos to share with my rose grower Lauren from Florx-eight. I was excited to spy 'Lady of Shalott', the only rose I grow in my home garden. The Waterlily House was small in comparison to the other structures on the property but popular—it was packed with people. The circular pathway

around the pond allowed everyone to have a good look at the waterlilies blooming in shades of purple, pink, and yellow. Monet should be jealous.

As the wind was picking up, and my time was running out, I hustled to the Temperate House, the largest glass Victorian greenhouse left in the world. It's overflowing with common, endangered, and extinct (meaning none exist outside of botanical gardens) specimens of plants from across the globe. I walked up a spiral staircase to a catwalk to get that picture above. Like my entire short visit to Kew, I could just get an overview, a big picture, a tourist's proof that I was there. I want so much more from Kew: the treetop walk, the nursery, the herbarium and library. I'll be back. I must go back.

If you're interested in reading more about my flower adventures, I write a free weekly newsletter that you can sign up for at ellenfrost.com.

*Ellen Frost is owner of Local Color Flowers.
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ASCFG Farm Tours Bring Growers Together

Rebecca Marrall

In 2023, the Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers organized twelve farm tours with over 400 attendees. Generously hosted by ASCFG members throughout North America, these farm tours facilitate direct farmer-to-farmer knowledge sharing. The events are daylong or half-day tours, and provide attendees with an overview of the cut flower crops, production practices, and markets and sales strategies of the host farm. Attendees have the opportunity to ask the hosts about their farming

and marketing practices, and often have the chance to connect with industry vendors and suppliers. In addition to the incredible learning that occurs on these tours, the opportunity to network with fellow cut flower farmers, to share ideas and make new friends, is very important. Based on the evaluation forms the ASCFG Directors have received during this year, it's one of the most impactful educational experiences the Association offers.

Upcoming Changes

To ensure that this program continues to grow in impact and reach, the organization is introducing a few changes. Starting with the upcoming call for 2024 Farm Tours, the ASCFG will ask prospective farm tour applicants to follow the newly-established eligibility criteria. One of these requirements includes some familiarity or background with instruction and/or public speaking. Because the farm tours are educational events that require a great deal of planning, lectures, and engagement with fellow members, we ask that prospective farm tour hosts have some prior instructional experience.

What does that look like? If you have led tours or workshops on your farm, or if you have relevant instructional or training experience from a different era in your life,

you may already have a sense of how to organize information into a narrative that shares valuable knowledge with recipients in an engaging and effective way. While there will be no formal requirements of instructional experience, the ASCFG will ask applicants to briefly describe their educational experiences.

Furthermore, the ASCFG is adding a requirement around farm infrastructure. To be considered an eligible host for an ASCFG Farm Tour, all applicants must have a cut flower farm that has been in operation for five or more years by the date of the farm tour. Please note that if the farm has more than one site, the proposed site of the farm tour must have been operational for five or more years. This requirement ensures that the prospective host and farm have established procedures and infrastructure that can offer a valuable learning experience to attendees who may travel from long distances to participate.

Farm Tour Application

Are you interested in serving as an ASCFG Farm Tour host in 2024? Here is a bit more detail about the application process. In addition to discussing and co-managing the event logistics, the ASCFG will ask applicants to share the following information.

Farm Overview: We will ask prospective applicants to describe the farm as if they were talking with fellow members. What do you grow? What will other growers be most excited to learn? What process or product





When cut flower farmers attend ASCFG Farm Tours, they engage in hands-on learning and often leave with new ideas to directly apply to their own growing operations and businesses. Tours can also be a source of industry camaraderie and new friendships.

are you, as the host, most proud of on your farm? Gathering this information is crucial as it will then be translated into an event announcement that prospective attendees will read. Having this information allows members to make an informed decision about whether they should attend.

Learning Outcomes: In addition to an overview of the farm, the ASCFG will ask prospective farm tour hosts to briefly list the three most important take-aways—also called learning outcomes—an attendees will learn on the farm tour. Examples include but are not limited to, “Attendees will learn how I manage my crop-specific breeding program and will gain ideas for their own.” or “Attendees will learn how I developed my sales channels through deliberate outreach to florists over the course of five years.” These brief statements, which will be published with the event announcement, will help prospective attendees determine whether the farm tour is a good fit for their educational needs.

Tour Program Outline: Lastly, the ASCFG is asking prospective farm tour hosts to provide a brief schedule of events. Whether you’re planning on a half- or a full day tour, applicants will be asked to provide a brief outline of planned activities for the duration of the farm tour.

For example, will you have guest speakers? Will there be hands-on activities, such as creating a flower crown or drafting a social media strategy? Will there be a demonstration and what will that entail? This brief outline can again help prospective attendees better understand if this event is right for their professional growth and development.

Conclusions

Farm Tours are already an impactful and joyful educational experience for our members, and with these small changes, the ASCFG seeks to further enhance a successful program for 2024 and beyond. Are you interested in hosting a farm tour? Fill out an application today! The deadline is January 1, 2024. Go to this webpage to learn more: <https://www.ascfg.org/2024-tour-application/> If you have any questions, you are very welcome to email us at membership@ascfg.org We look forward to developing next year’s roster of Farm Tours and we hope to see you on it!

*Rebecca Marrall is the ASCFG Education Director.
Contact her education@ascfg.org*

Growing Flowers and Community

Julie Martens Forney



Pendleton's Country Market is celebrating 40 years in business as a diverse family farm. Owners John and Karen Pendleton share insights from decades of market and flower farming in the epic weather of Kansas.

"We've been big farmers, and we've been little farmers," says Karen Pendleton. She owns and operates Pendleton's Country Market with John, her husband of 43 years. John's father was a first-generation farmer who raised corn and soybeans, and owned a feedlot with 500 cattle.

"He grew corn for silage and livestock feed, and soybeans and hay for cash crops to carry the farm through the rest of the year," John shares. "In the late 1970s, crops were so good that bankers were telling farmers to plant fencerow to fencerow, pushing them to take loans to expand operations." Then interest rates hit 21 percent, and land prices started to decline, setting the stage for the farm crisis of the early 1980s.

In a bid to dodge being a casualty of the crisis, the Pendletons started to explore alternative crops—"diversified agriculture" was the term used by farm extension agents. "We added half an acre of asparagus, and the media really picked up on it. Some of our best marketing occurred at that time," Karen recalls.

Hydroponic tomatoes came next, along with rhubarb and peonies—crops that expanded product offerings in that early spring window. "John was still farming corn and soybeans the rest of the year, so we needed things that wrapped up by the end of May," Karen explains.

The product mix thrilled customers, but when they came to the farm to pick up asparagus and saw the greenhouses for the hydroponic tomatoes, they thought they could buy bedding plants. "So we started raising bedding plants," Karen laughs. "We had to put them down the rows between the tomato plants in the greenhouse."

The couple quickly realized they were making more money



on bedding plants than tomatoes, and the shift to flowers began in earnest. These days the farm's crop mix runs roughly one-third each specialty cut flowers, vegetables, and bedding plants. The growing area devoted to horticultural crops comes in at about 5 acres each vegetables and flowers, with another 15 acres of asparagus. "We're not intensive farmers," Karen says. "A lot of people could grow the same amount of stuff on three acres, but we have the land so we use wide rows that we can drive our Gators through."

The Journey to Flowers

The farm's transition to flower growing started with dried flowers. "We'd plant out any extra bedding plants that didn't sell and dry them. That was in the 1980s, when dried flowers were so popular, so that business took off," Karen says. "In fact, we did dried flower weddings until about 2000, and then that trend stopped almost completely."

The demand for fresh cut flowers started in the early 1990s, which made John ecstatic. "Fresh flowers are so much easier than dried. It was wonderful when we started selling those," he says. Karen attributes Martha Stewart for the shift from dried florals to fresh. "Her first wedding book was full of peonies and other old-fashioned flowers. I really think she single-handedly changed our business and started the push for garden and local flowers."

In addition to the 200 or so bouquets the team creates each week for farmers' markets, the floral arm of Pendleton's also designs wedding and event flowers. "We did our first wedding in 1991, and I haven't been able to control that part of the business since then," Karen shares. John is especially proud that they have never done any promotions for wedding florals—"the growth has all been by word of mouth," he says.

Before the pandemic shutdowns, Pendleton's typically designed for two or three weddings every weekend from May to November. "What is also shocking is the number of young ladies who show up at our Saturday market booth, and one says she's getting married that day and then has everyone pick out their bouquets for the wedding," John says.



"[The local farmer's markets] our social life," John says. "We have a loyal customer base that we've grown with through the years."

Right: The Pendleton flower stand is a fixture at two local farmers' markets. Left: Sunflowers stand up to Kansas heat without missing a blooming beat. This photo was taken in 2019, the year an EF4 tornado hit Pendleton's, destroying five out of seven greenhouses and damaging their home. The business downsized after that event, operating with the two remaining greenhouses.



“A business plan is a great thing to have,” Karen says, “but the best thing to do is to plant something—because you don’t know what you don’t know until you do it.”

-Karen Pendleton

Crop Mix Keeps Customers—and Cash—Coming

The farm’s spring floral offerings include peony, stock, lisianthus, and delphinium. “I don’t grow ranunculus, anemone or anything that really takes time in early spring,” Karen says. “At that point in the year, I’m in the greenhouse transplanting bedding plants, and then asparagus starts.” She also doesn’t grow tulips, but instead teams up with Amanda Cook of Cook’s Market in Baldwin City, selling her tulips.

In spring, asparagus is the big draw to the farm. “We’ve found that people don’t come for early bedding plants, but wait until the asparagus comes in,” Karen says. While customers do flock to the farm from nearby Lawrence (3 miles away), 75 percent come from Kansas City, a 20-mile drive. “We’re one mile off a four-lane highway, so it’s easy access,” Karen adds. “Our location is a definite advantage.”

By the time the real Kansas heat arrives in July with 100-degree days, sunflowers, tuberose, black-eyed Susans, zinnias, and celosias are ready to go. “I don’t even start my celosia (I grew 40 varieties this year) or zinnias until the end of May so they’ll last longer through the season,” Karen explains. “We don’t do well with direct seeding late

in summer because of weed pressure, so we start everything in plugs—even sunflowers, which go in 50-cell plugs.”

In summer, on the vegetable side of the business, the CSA gobbles 75 percent of the farm’s produce. The rest sells at local farmers’ markets and on-farm at Pendleton’s Country Market. The farmstand features fresh produce, farm-grown flowers, and some garden décor, pots, and other local items.

Flower sales stay steady for fall, when football weekends create a clamor for bouquets. “Event work is strong for us,” Karen says. “The demand for flowers really doesn’t let up until frost, which can be from mid-September to October 1. We’re in a low-lying valley, so if it frosts, we get it first.”

“A business plan is a great thing to have,” Karen says, “but the best thing to do is to plant something—because you don’t know what you don’t know until you do it. And don’t even think about growing flowers until you have a cooler. The amount of stress added by not having a cooler is beyond measure.”

As flowers fade from the sales roster, late-season vegetables kick into gear, including a one-time Fall Storage CSA Share, featuring fall favorites like sweet potatoes, winter squash, turnips, end-of-the-season peppers or fresh greens.

Connecting with Customers

It's been 40 years since the Pendletons began farming as a business, which means 40 years have ticked by in their lives, as well. "We're of social security age," Karen says. "All of our friends are retiring. We're thinking about it, but we have a farm—and we're still having fun."

"We have told people the farm is for sale and have a lot of reasons why this is a phenomenal place," John laughs. "We have a nice, new home after the 2019 tornado, senior water rights, some of the best soil in the Midwest, natural gas available to use in the greenhouses, three-cycle electricity, a mile from a four-lane highway, a lot of acreage—someone could do something interesting here."

At this stage of the game, the couple is strategically making choices that connect them more with their customers—like starting a podcast called "The Stalk of the Town." "Our initial goal wasn't necessarily to get new customers, but to let people who know us already get to know us better," Karen says.

An employee, Kory Jacobs, suggested the couple consider doing a podcast because she was fascinated by the stories they tell. "She learned how to be a podcast producer, so she handles all the editing—and making us sound intelligent," Karen laughs. "We're so thankful for her. If we had to do the technical side, we couldn't." The best part of the podcast? Preserving family stories for future generations. "Our kids are thrilled we're doing this," Karen adds.

The podcast topics are all over the board and intentionally not focused on education. "We have done this way too long to know that we aren't teaching anybody anything," Karen says. Instead, the podcast is really about small town life and how the farm relates to the community.

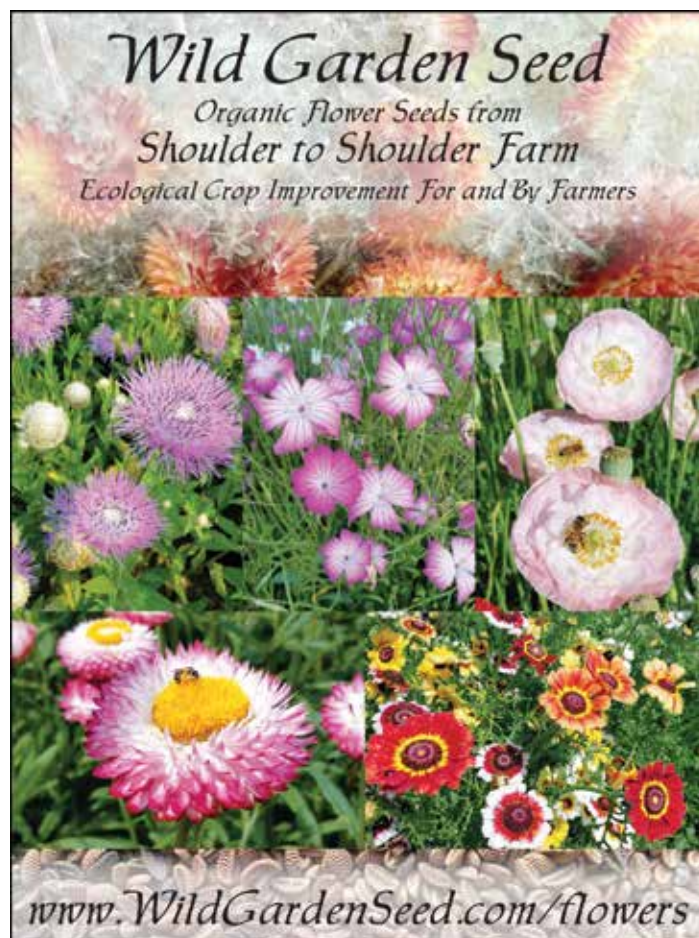
The response has been surprising, and the Pendletons are shocked at how many people listen. "We probably have 200 people who are avid listeners, who listen when it goes up that first day," John says. "They're mostly folks in northeast Kansas, but there's someone in Germany who is the first to listen every week. We're currently in 12 countries and 42 states, with an average of 1,000 listeners each week. It's amazing."

Advice for Flower Growers

With a lifetime of flower farming under their belts, the Pendletons offer just a few pieces of advice for new growers. "A business plan is a great thing to have," Karen says, "but the best thing to do is to plant something—because you don't know what you don't know until you do it. And don't even think about growing flowers until you have a cooler. The amount of stress added by not having a cooler is beyond measure."

John also says that "a cooler is huge. If you can't afford something big, you could go with a small refrigerator with a glass front. A cooler is really just like building a greenhouse. The first one you get will always be way too small, way too soon. You could even start with a heavily insulated, air-conditioned room. Then you can use a CoolBot to turn that room into a cooler.

"Look for a gas station or grocery store that's updating or going out of business. Try to find something used, or deal with a local heating and cooling company that works with used units. Then, when you can afford it, buy as good a quality unit as you





Right: On Fridays, the flower team at Pendletons turns up the radio and cranks out bouquets. “We don’t have a set number we do each week, but it’s usually 200 to 300,” Karen says. The farm has 10 seasonal employees on the payroll; a few have hours in winter. Left: “The Stalk of the Town” is John and Karen Pendleton’s podcast, which shares stories about small town life and how the farm relates to the community. The podcast generated over 900 streams in the first month, 759 above average for new a podcast.

can. It pays dividends when you can store flowers for a week or two before you need to use them.”

When they started growing flowers, the Pendletons had the advantage of their big farm equipment, which they’ve used through the years. “We have front end loaders that can unload pottery or pallets of potting soil. We have a larger tractor with front wheel assist that can carry a large undercutter to undercut potatoes or dig peony or rhubarb plants. Don’t underestimate what those kinds of tools can do to help your business,” John adds.

Crafting a Legacy

When the couple was first getting into diversified agriculture, they went to visit a “really big strawberry grower in Kansas City. One of the questions we asked him was, ‘What would make your business better?’ He said, ‘I need more, better competition.’ The better competition we have near us, the better we’ll be,” John shares.

“For the longest time in this area, any horticulture crop was difficult to grow or even find. We have it all: wind, hail, -20 degrees in winter, 100 degrees in summer. It’s not easy. But when we show people we can be good growers here, that we can have these crops locally available, it helps all of us,” he continues. “People use the word co-opetition. It’s more fun to be friends with your competitors than adversaries. So many times you can work together for

the benefit of everybody and do something as a group.”

Toward that end, the Pendletons helped form a group called “Growing Lawrence.” It started as fruit and vegetable growers and slowly added Christmas tree farmers, flower growers, and farmers who retail meat. The group draws from a 60-mile radius and meets the first Wednesday of every month for networking and education. Topics cover everything from social media, to government programs, to where to get seeds. “That group is the best thing I do for myself each month,” Karen says.

John agrees. “So often we see organic farmers getting upset with conventional farmers, or flower farmers upset with vegetable farmers who get into flower growing. All of these things go very well together. We don’t need to pit people against each other. We all work too hard to fight over who works better. Networking and community growing is the way to go.” Karen adds, “If there’s anything we want to be known for, it’s that we have been community-minded and have brought people together.”

Julie Martens Forney is an avid gardener and freelance writer who’s been writing about flower and plant production, horticulture research, and consumer gardening for over 30 years. Contact her at julie@wordsthatbloom.com

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Encarsia formosa: Biological Control Agent of the Greenhouse Whitefly

Raymond A. Cloyd

Encarsia formosa is a parasitoid of the greenhouse whitefly, *Trialeurodes vaporariorum*. *E. formosa* can be released into greenhouse production systems to manage whitefly populations on ornamental and vegetable crops. This article discusses biology and behavior, commercial availability, use in greenhouses, and quality assessment associated with *E. formosa*.

Biology and behavior

E. formosa adult females are 1/20 of an inch (1.0 millimeter) long with a dark brown to black head and thorax. Females have a yellow abdomen and translucent wings (Figures 1 and 2). Female *E. formosa* can reproduce through parthenogenesis, which is a form of reproduction where an egg can develop without being fertilized by a male.

A female uses her antennae to probe a whitefly nymph to assess suitability (based on size) for development of a larva. A single egg is laid into the whitefly nymph. Females prefer laying eggs into third and fourth instar whitefly nymphs because they're large enough to accommodate development of the larvae. *E. formosa* females actively search for localized whitefly infestations and remain in areas where whiteflies are concentrated.

A single female can lay up to 15 eggs per day and up to 300 over her lifetime. A female will not lay an egg into a whitefly nymph that's been parasitized by another *E. formosa* female. A larva emerges (ecloses) from an egg and the life cycle continues.

There are three larval instars (stages between each molt). A whitefly pupa (fourth nymphal stage) parasitized by *E. formosa* eventually turns black (Figure 3), whereas a non-parasitized whitefly pupa is white or yellow

low with a T-shaped opening on the top. An adult *E. formosa* emerges by chewing a circular opening through the top portion of a dead whitefly pupa (Figure 4). *E. formosa* adults can emerge from parasitized whitefly pupae for up to two weeks.

The time required to complete the life cycle, from egg to adult, varies depending on temperature. This cycle, based on temperature, is shown in Table 1. *E. formosa* is most active at temperatures greater than 64F (17C). Optimal temperatures for managing whitefly populations are between 68 and 81F (20 and 25C) and relative humidity between 50% and 80%. *E. formosa* is more active during the day than at night. Short daylengths or photoperiods (less than 12 hours), temperatures below 64F (17C) and a relative humidity less than 50% can negatively affect the ability of *E. formosa* to manage whitefly populations.

E. formosa females live from 10 to 30 days, however, adult longevity depends not only on temperature, but also on food availability. Females feed on honeydew, a clear sticky liquid produced by whiteflies, as a food source. In addition, females feed on the fluids exuded from wounds created by the ovipositor (egg-laying device). Furthermore, *E. formosa* females feed on second-instar nymphs and pupae to obtain nutrients for egg production.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

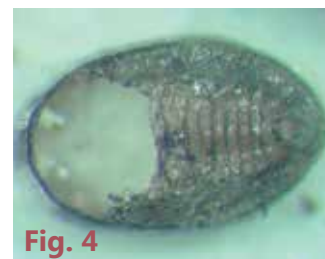


Fig. 4

Table 1. Number of days for *Encarsia formosa* to complete a life cycle, egg to adult, based on temperature.

Days	Temperature
10	86° F (30° C)
15	77° F (25° C)
17	74° F (23° C)
21	65° F (18° C)
45	54° F (12° C)

Effects of plants on *Encarsia formosa*

Plant leaf hairs (trichomes) can inhibit the ability of *E. formosa* females to locate whitefly nymphs, thus reducing their ability to manage whitefly populations. *E. formosa* can manage whitefly populations on plants with few hairs, such as tomato (*Solanum lycopersicum*) and sweet pepper (*Capsicum annuum*), but not on cucumber (*Cucumis sativus*) plants where leaves have abundant hairs and thick leaf veins that inhibit movement. *E. formosa* females walk faster on leaves with few hairs, which increases their ability to locate whitefly nymphs.

Commercial availability and use in greenhouses

E. formosa can be purchased from suppliers of biological control agents as release cards (Figure 5) containing parasitized greenhouse whiteflies from which adults will emerge. There are approximately 50 parasitized greenhouse whiteflies per release card. Remove yellow sticky cards used to monitor whitefly adult populations before placing the cards within a crop to prevent capturing *E. formosa* adults. Two weeks after placing release cards within a crop, re-

place yellow sticky cards. Place release cards on the lower leaves of plants to reduce exposure to sunlight. Do not get the release cards wet when watering plants.

Quality assessment

To determine the quality of product received from suppliers, follow the procedures below to verify that *E. formosa* adults are emerging from release cards. Sample five release cards from each shipment received from the supplier.

1. Place a single release card into a Mason jar. Attach a 1.0 x 1.0 in. (2.5 x 2.5 cm) yellow sticky square onto the underside of the lid using double-sided sticky foam (Figure 6).
2. Record the number of *E. formosa* adults captured on the yellow sticky square (Figures 7 and 8) after four, seven and 10 days.
3. Count and record the number of parasitized whitefly pupae per release card. Divide the number of *E. formosa* adults captured on the yellow sticky square by the total number of parasitized whitefly pupae per release card. Multiply by 100 to obtain percent emergence of *E. formosa* adults. Percent emergence of *E. formosa* adults from release cards should be greater than 80%.

E. formosa can effectively manage greenhouse whitefly populations in vegetable and ornamental cropping systems. For example, greenhouse producers can use *E. formosa* to manage greenhouse whitefly populations on tomato crops with minimal inputs from insecticide applications.

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Fig. 5

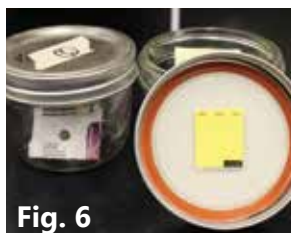


Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8

Getting the Most from Your Soil

Julie Martens Forney

Keeping a flower farm profitable hinges on many things, but a foundational aspect is soil. If you don't tend your soil, your crops will suffer. Learn how three farmers are building and maintaining healthy soil, along with some tips from a soil scientist.

Soil isn't especially glamorous, but when you're a flower farmer making your living off the land, grabbing a handful of healthy soil nourishes the soul in a special way. Ignore soil health, and you may still grow crops that sell well, but you'll likely jeopardize the long-term productivity of your land. That's because devoting time, money, and labor to your soil pays dividends that continue beyond the moment. Truly, building great soil is a marathon, not a sprint, and good—or bad—practices do catch up with you.

Soils vary regionally and can also vary on one farm. A sandy pocket here, a deep clay layer there, and developing a soil plan quickly becomes tricky. But with consistent management, even soils that are initially challenging can reward your efforts with healthy crops and a soil teeming with life.

To dig into this down-to-earth topic of soil management, we spoke with three farmers and asked them about their soil practices, and gleaned some dirt-under-the-fingernails tips from Dr. Melanie Stock, Extension Urban & Small Farms Specialist at Utah State University.



Laura Zimmermann

Cool Hollow Flower Farm
Hagerstown, Maryland

Farm basics: Started in 2019, Cool Hollow Flower Farm is located in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Through the Rock and River Flower Collective, Laura mainly wholesales her flowers to event designers and florists in the Washington, D.C. and Philadelphia markets, as well as Maryland and northern Virginia. She also does a spring CSA and occasionally a fall one, if time permits. She grows on about an acre, including two 24 x 96 hoopouses.

Native soil: “Our first soil tests revealed a very acidic pH and extremely low levels of phosphorus and calcium,” Laura says. “It had some severe deficiencies and problems, but nothing that couldn't be fixed.” The farm is part of an area that was settled in the 1700s. Although the rich clay soil has been “in production since at least the 1780s, it had never been farmed in any modern way. I was worried it might be completely used up, but every year has been very good,” she adds.

Soil philosophy: “Our farm has a conservation overlay on it to have only one house on it in the future. It's also zoned agricultural, so the land will probably always be used for some kind of farming. I'd like to leave the soil in better health than we found it,” Laura says.

Beaver Creek winds around two sides of the property, so Laura makes careful farming choices to ensure no fertilizer runoff. “The creek hosts natural spawning of brown trout, and fishermen drive from all over the Mid-Atlantic to fish there,” she says. “We don't want to do anything to endanger that.”



At Cool Hollow Flower Farm, beds are flipped three times each year. "We're growing intensively, so we have to keep the soil strong," Laura says. "Right now, every time we flip beds we add compost and organic fertilizer."

Greatest challenge: "Understanding the complexities of soil health and the needs of the soil," Laura says. "Sometimes you need to look at ratios, not just raise one thing or lower another." Her secret weapon in soil treatment comes from a local Mennonite-owned hardware store. "One gentleman there loves looking at soil tests and putting together organic treatments for soil. We go there every year to have him help us," she adds.

Key soil practices: In addition to regular soil tests, the farm gets good quality compost, including Leafgro, a compost product made by the Maryland Environmental Service from yard waste. "We also buy huge bales of FoxFarm amendments or Vermont compost—mixes with mycorrhizae in them," Laura explains. "We blend those with Leafgro and the native soil."

Many raised beds provide the best possible growing situation—and make flipping beds easy. Laura broadforks the hoop-houses and aims for low-till methods elsewhere. One of her biggest goals is to get a compost tea system going. "I'd like to have a system that bubbles so I could spray that tea on plants to help with diseases," she says.

Advice to new farmers: "Don't skip over soil for the glamorous things like looking at seed catalogs," Laura says. "Building good soil is like putting electricity and plumbing in your house. You need that great foundation or you'll have problems with production."

Laura's best soil resource has been Dr. John Dole's textbook, *Floriculture: Principles and Species*. "I got it online at used textbooks, and it's been fairly helpful with everything."

Todd and Kathleen Jameson

Balanced Harvest Farm
Needham, Indiana

Farm basics: Two acres of woodies and three acres of cut flowers supply the retail bouquets that Todd and Kathleen Jameson sell at five markets each week in Indianapolis. They started growing at Balanced Harvest Farm in 1999. The farm isn't certified organic, but definitely "moving in that direction for the last two decades," Todd says.

He grew up on a specialty crop farm in New Jersey, helping his family raise vegetables and flowers. "I have farming in my DNA. It has been such a part of my life that production is who we are. We have a high tunnel, heated greenhouse—any means of production we need, we have in house. We brought our operation from seed, to harvest, to shipping," he says.

Native soil: The farm is on sandy loam soil with a well-drained subsoil and ample water. "We went through the drought of 2012 and never had to reduce the amount of water we were running," Todd shares. Located in corn and soybean country, the property had been conventionally farmed for years. When the Jamesons bought it, there were no earthworms on the land.

Before he started farming any production in soil, Todd cover cropped it for three years. "We mixed tillage radish to break up the hardpan under the soil and extract nutrients from the soil below. We used rye, which is allelopathic and tends to suppress the weeds. We experimented with different legumes to try to put some nitrogen back into the soil. We did every possible combination



we could think of.”

For three years the process went like this: cover crop, plow under, reseed, plow under, and repeat—until one day suddenly the soil had life. “Having a living soil was mind altering for me,” Todd says. “Growing up on the conventional side, the thought was always that we’ll pull a perfect crop off as much as we can—and then we also have a whole slew of chemicals to help make it happen. I didn’t think we could do it without them.”

Soil philosophy: When Todd was 13, he met an Italian immigrant farm neighbor who was building his first greenhouses. He invited Todd to join him, hiring him to work weekends and after school. “I didn’t know then I was making one of the best friends I’d ever have in my entire life,” he says. “I learned more about profitable farming from that family. He taught me something that changed my life. It translates as this: ‘A beautiful house and a big farm will never improve your soil, but excellent soil will build you a beautiful house and many big barns.’”

That saying framed Todd’s mind from a very early time to realize that

although you can improve soil over the long term, you are so much better off in the farming business having the proper piece of land. Which is why, once Todd moved his family to Indiana for work, he kept a shovel in the car—because he was always searching for land he could buy to farm.

“My formula is that I have to start with quality farm ground,” he explains. A chance meeting with a retired soil borer from the Indiana Department of Agriculture honed the search grid for his dream soil—sandy loam without clay subsoil. The borer pinpointed the part of Indiana where Todd could find his dream farm—and he did.

Greatest challenge: “Weed control is always the 900-pound gorilla because we’re not using herbicides,” he says. The farm does a lot of straw mulching, which suppresses and minimizes weeds. “We also plow that straw under, so it also adds to the organic matter in the soil.”

Key soil practices: In addition to cover cropping, incorporating organic matter is an ongoing routine. “When we bought this farm, we had a half of one percent (.005 percent) of organic matter. Now it’s up to 4.5 percent. Our goal is to get that number to 6 to 7 percent,” Todd says.

For organic matter, Todd spreads manure when he can get a good source. “I especially like manure that has bedding mixed into it—straw or sawdust that captures the urine,” he shares. “When I can get a good, clean supply of it, I use it.” The farm also uses leaf compost generated by the flower growers

next door, Pam and Larry Tucker of J.P. Parker Flowers. “We’ve seen huge benefits from using leaf compost,” Todd adds. “I don’t say that my way is the right way, but it’s the system that’s worked very well for us.”

Advice to new farmers: Focus on constantly replenishing organic matter in soil. Rely on a mixture of green manures and other organic matter. Nature never leaves bare soil. “Keep soil covered. Seed a cover crop as soon as you can after another crop has been removed, and allow cover crops to stay in place over winter,” Todd says. “Legumes can create some of your nitrogen source. We trying to master that.”

Remember that soil is alive. “My best chance of pulling off a great crop is having live, vital soil. You can farm in a more conventional method where you’re putting seed in the ground and putting fertilizer in the ground to feed your plant, or you can feed the soil and your soil will feed your plant. It’s two very different methods of farming,” he explains.

He also shares some general farming advice. “Farming isn’t necessarily what you think or dream it will be. There’s always Plan A, the one you hope to use, and Plan B, your fallback plan, but you better be prepared to use a mixture of Plan C, D and E, because farming is not scripted. I don’t know that I ever had a Plan A that worked.”

His favorite soil resource is RoxburyFarm.com, specifically the educational piece, “The Whole Farm Approach of Plant and Soil Health at Roxbury Farm.”





"The most important thing to do as a grower is to test the soil and find someone to help you figure out what it all means," says Shanti Rade. "You don't want to add things unknowingly because there's not some magic bullet that will solve all your soil problems. It all takes time."

Shanti Rade

Whipstone Farm
Paulden, Arizona

Farm basics: At Whipstone Farm, Shanti and Cory Rade have been growing flowers and vegetables for 20 years. They raise 3 to 4 acres of flowers that grow nine months of the year. Flowers sell wholesale to florists and retail at farmers' markets and through their CSA. "We grow a diversity of flowers in every season so we can make mixed bouquets, our biggest flower product," Shanti explains. She is currently the ASCFG's South and Central Regional Director.

Native soil: The Southwest has aridisols. "That just means it's dry here," Shanti says. "There's not a lot of natural rainfall and so not a lot of plant growth to break down and feed organic matter into soil, so we generally have arid soils that are very low in organic matter." Southwestern soils also typically have high calcium carbonate

levels and a lot of mineral nutrients.

Whipstone Farm grows at two locations with different soils—one rocky, one not. "There wasn't a lot of farming in our area previously—it was more ranching and grazing," Shanti says. "So we didn't have issues of super-depleted soils due to continual farming for 100 years, and we also didn't have to worry about soil contamination."

Soil philosophy: "My feeling about plants in general is that they want to grow," Shanti says. "Even if you do very little—for us, that means add water—you can grow things. But can you sustain that over a long period when you're harvesting crops and taking them away? That's when you need to start understanding what's going on."

The secret to profiting off what you're growing starts with soil. "Sometimes you can get a quick fix to pull something out of a funk, but the super long-term goal is to focus on

soil health and capacity for growing good crops. Working on the soil now gives you years of benefit down the road," she adds. "It's a lifetime investment in learning more and implementing the practices and tweaking the system over time. It's not a one-time-done deal."

Greatest challenge: "I was really caught off guard with how out of whack our nutrient levels had become," she shares. Shanti wrote about this in her Regional Report in *The Cut Flower Quarterly*, Spring 2023 (p. 42). The farm's soil had become imbalanced based on their management practices. The soil is naturally high in phosphorus and potassium, but levels had jumped extremely high due to 20 years of faithfully applying organic matter.

"In the beginning, we studied foundational small farming resources and followed the consistent advice of applying organic matter. There's not much compost available here, so we used horse manure, composting it ourselves," she shares. "We did occasional soil tests, which said we needed more nitrogen, which is a low product in horse manure."

The result of following the add-organic-matter mantra? P and K levels climbed, weeds multiplied, and nitrogen levels remained low.

Key soil practices: Despite the challenges, it's not as if the farm hasn't been productive and profitable. Crops aren't showing signs of toxicity. "We finally got some quality soil testing and help in interpreting results, and it made us do a 180 in our management practices," Shanti adds.

Soil testing is No. 1. "We got

them for a long time but they weren't as illustrative as what I wanted them to be. They weren't giving me all the information I needed, but I didn't know what was missing until I had someone help me interpret the test," she shares. A new extension agent was the catalyst to jumpstart the soil management changes.

To address the soil's low nitrogen status, Shanti has developed a solid cover crop rotation plan for three to four years. "That's going to be our magic bullet, but it's hard because we have to water everything we plant, including a cover crop," she says. "My goal is to get better at being more willing to take areas out of production so I can grow a cover crop."

She's also switched her nitrogen source—no more manure. "We started using an organic nitrogen fertilizer and saw an immediate difference in plant growth and crop health," she adds.

Advice to new farmers: "There's nothing wrong with just planting and seeing how things grow. But work on getting a soil test to get a baseline before you add things to soil. If it's hard to interpret, get help," Shanti says. She suggests checking with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, your state Department of Agriculture, or the local cooperative extension office. "Ask for the soil expert—all those avenues are usually free," she says.

"Just because you think you know something, it's still okay to change your paradigm," she says. "Don't be so hard into some belief system that you can't change. For us it was adding organic matter. Remember it's a long-term process—really, a lifetime investment. If you own your property, take a super-long view."

Relating soil test results to organic production was one of the hurdles Whipstone Farm had to overcome, and it was the local extension agent who helped with that issue. In addition to working with your local NCRS and extension office, Shanti also suggests checking out Ellen Polishuk's resources at PlantToProfit.com.



Melanie Stock

Assistant Professor/Extension Urban & Small Farms Specialist
Plants, Soils, and Climate Dept.
Utah State University

The basics: Melanie's background is in soil science; her passion is working with small farms. "The secret to success with a small-scale operation is efficiently managed, high value crops—like cut flowers," she says. "On a small scale, it's possible to manage the soil precisely."

Common misconception about soil: "One of the largest misconceptions about healthy soil is that you have to spend a lot of money to get it," Melanie says. "The reality is that you don't have to 'buy all the things' to add to it. I recommend taking a more minimal approach."

For instance, pursue nutrient cycling: incorporating residue of healthy plants into soil, which helps return nutrients to the soil. "Whenever the season or crop is over, whatever is left of a plant—if it's not diseased—return it to the soil in some way," she explains. It could be chopped up and turned in, tilled under, laid on top to cover soil through winter or made into compost.

Greatest challenge for growers: In small-scale farming, "loving soil to death," as Melanie puts it, "is an easy trap to fall into. Because there's less land, it's easy to add too many nutrients, which ultimately reduces soil health and is a problem for sustainability, as excess nutrients are easily lost to the environment. It's important to have intention behind each thing you add to soil."

Organic matter, for example, varies depending on the native soil. In the Midwest, organic matter is usually at 5 percent. In northern Utah, it's 1.5 to 2 percent, while southern Utah might have one-half a percent. "Adding organic matter is good, but it's important to realize that compost comes with so many nutrients," she explains.



Dr. Melanie Stock runs trial gardens at the Utah State University Farm. “I share with researchers of vegetables, fruit and turf, but flowers are expanding more and more,” she says. She works to incorporate cover crops into the production areas as part of the farm’s nutrient cycling.

“It usually has equal parts nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and potassium (K), but plants need more N than the others. If you hit plants’ N need with compost, the P and K will be way overmet—and in soil, K is a salt.”

This is why it’s important to do a soil test: to find out what nutrients are actually needed. “The soil test defines the genuine need,” Melanie says. In terms of compost, typically the safe recommendation is an inch per year, depending, of course, on the compost source and what the native soil is like.

Best soil practices: Do a soil test every few years, sending it to a lab in your state. Follow the recommendations. If you can’t interpret the test sufficiently, visit your local co-operative extension office. “Be mindful of fertilizer selection. A lot of money is spent to create attractive product containers, and you pay for the TLC in manufacturing and advertising,” Melanie says. “Look at the guaranteed analysis and buy only what the soil needs.”

Rotate crops. Make a crop plan for the following year and keep notes this year. As you do, consider ways to cycle resources in your operation to close the system more.

Cover soil at all times. “Avoid bare soil—keep it covered to protect it from the elements and help preserve soil structure,” she says. For winter cover, use chopped leaves or straw.

Grow cover crops. “With small-scale farms, it’s often not an option to take a field or bed out of production for an entire year, so I try to sneak cover crops in,” Melanie explains. “If a crop like ranunculus or anemone has an early harvest, follow them with a quick cover crop. Maybe summer is too hot to grow, but a cover crop could grow well before fall crops go in. Follow dahlias with a winter cover crop.”

Other options are to tuck cover crops between rows of flowers or along the edges of raised beds. Use low-growing cover crops on the ends of beds. “A cover crop cannot be

more aggressive than the main crop or it will be too much competition,” she adds.

Just for the West: Western soils are on the threshold of having high salinity. “We rely on snow to move salinity out of the root zone. In hoophouses, we sometimes remove the plastic in winter to let the snow melt help move salts down through soil,” Melanie says. “Once soil is saturated, 6 inches of water reduces salinity by 50 percent.”

Favorite soil resources: “My own!” she laughs. Flowers.USU.edu is the general production horticulture website containing work that Melanie has done, along with vegetable and fruit specialists. Most information there would be relevant to flower farmers.

Melanie’s lab has a website with resources listed: smallfarmslab.com. She also suggests thesoilhouseinstitute.org as a general resource that’s geared to managing carbon in soil, cover crops, fertility, etc.



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Fuller, double-fringed variation of Corelli, with petals all the way to the center of bloom at harvest stage. Otherwise traits are similar to the Corelli model, with extra large buds, durable, top-branching stems and long vase life. 4' tall.



Celosia Turbo

Pear Extra-large, broad, fan-shaped flowers up to eight inches across with a fuzzy, deep-green base and softest cream green combs tipped with an elegant band of soft baby pink covering the edge of each crenulation. Sturdy stems and long shelf life. 32-40" tall depending on spacing.



Lisianthus Solo Violet

The world's FIRST pollen-free lisianthus introduction! This results in stain-free blooms and extremely long vase life. Blooms 22-24 weeks from sowing. Flowers are rose-form, with swirling semi-double petals. 24-36" tall.



Helianthus 'Summer Lovin'

Pollen-free, creamy-yellow flowers with light-to-dark-maroon rings and dark centers. Large flowers borne on tall strong stems of branching plants. 6' tall.



Aster Optimo Red

Resistant or tolerant against Fusarium! Plus, due to extra-thick petals, Optimo is less susceptible to Botrytis. Highly double flowers feature an extra swirl of petals at the center. Plant form is a spray-type habit with much reduced basal branching. 36–40" tall.



Matthiola Stox Mix

Robust plants with woody stems. Outstanding vase life, heat resistant to aid more extended summer harvest, earlier flowering. Crop time 8–16 weeks from transplant. Tall spikes with high bloom volume, 26–30" tall.



Didiscus Lace Mix

Flowers have a sweet scent and are similar to Queen Anne's lace. Wonderful in arrangements and border and a great filler. Blooms July through September. 24" tall.



Dianthus Amazon Lavender Magic

Dark green, glossy leaves. Bright, serrated flowers on strong stems. No vernalization necessary. Outstanding heat tolerance. An excellent commercial cutflower with high yields of useable stems.



Helianthus 'Aureola'

Pollen-free cutflower with strong single stems. Large dark 14–18" diam disc surrounded by a multilayered fringe of deep golden yellow ray petals. Very quick from sowing to harvest. 5–5½' tall.



***Lilium* OA 'Dutch Design'**

This unique variety is orange with nice freckles in the flower. The bloom size is smaller, making it perfect for summer field bouquets. It is brand new, so quantities are limited to one box per customer. Ninety days to flower with medium stem length.



***Lilium* LA 'Belverdere'**

This LA type is beautiful, because it will be white in full sun, but with some filtered shade or lower light levels, you will have a gorgeous champagne-colored flower. It is a well-balanced symmetrical and fully double-flower form and does well in bulb production.

***Lilium* LA 'Beverly Gold'**

A lovely double rosette-form gold-yellow flower. Great bud count on sturdy stems, one of the first good double LA variety types.



***Lilium* LA 'Backhand'**

This is a very nice orange-colored double flower. This variety still must prove itself in bulb production, but the blooms are nice and strong.



***Lilium* LA 'Caddy'**

'Caddy' has two layers of orange colors in a double flower; it's almost like a double-flowering 'Royal Sunset.' This variety still must prove itself in bulb production, but the bloom design is quite unique.



***Lilium* LA 'Crosscourt'**

A bright-yellow double-flowering LA with plenty of flower buds on the stem. The color is very similar to 'El Divo.' For this first generation of double-flowering LAs it is almost perfect.



***Lilium* LA 'Forehand'**

This is a nice gold- to-orange double flower. This variety is very strong and produces nice flowers. We foresee great market potential for this variety.



RoseLily Irvana®

'Irvana' is one of the newest varieties in the RoseLily series. With its white-yellow double flowers, this selection is loved in the retail market already. It has no pollen and a pleasant fragrance. Definitely worth a try!



RoseLily Ludwina®

A fantastic yellow double-flowering oriental lily! We suggest using size 17/19, which will give you three to five blooms. This lily name means "friend of the people." It is a very popular name in Scandinavian countries, but fewer than 300 people have it in the U.S.



Agastache 'Guava Lava'

A brightly colored North American native hybrid and favorite of pollinators, 'Guava Lava' begins to bloom in the heat of the summer and continues for many weeks. Coral-orange flowers are held on equally colorful mauve-pink calyces. Even after the flower has finished, the calyces remain attractive.



Artemisia 'Silver Lining'

A spectacular, durable foliage perennial. Broadly dissected silver leaves are showy from spring to fall. The mounded low and wide habit maintains perfect form all season and resists opening up. A Proven Winners® perennial.



Baptisia Decadence Deluxe® Periwinkle Popsicle

Later to flower than most baptisia, this cultivar does not show color until most other varieties are finishing bloom. Compared with the light blue 'Decadence® Deluxe 'Blue Bubbly,' 'Periwinkle Popsicle' flowers are a dark shade of blue. A Proven Winners® perennial.



Hemerocallis Rainbow Rhythm® Blazing Glory

Enjoy six-inch diameter golden-yellow flowers with a bold, burgundy-red eye and matching picotee edge. Compared to 'King of the Ages' the flowers are ½" smaller, more golden yellow in color, and have a more pronounced eye and picotee edge; the plant is also about six inches shorter. A Proven Winners® perennial.



xHeucherella Fun and Games® Capture the Flag

This large-leaved variety has deeply lobed chartreuse leaves with dramatic burgundy red centers. 'Capture the Flag' will put up new leaves early in the season and hold foliage interest through the fall, with winter color showing in warmer zones without snow cover.



Hibiscus Summerific® All Eyes on Me

One of our most compact hardy hibiscus to date! Despite its scaled-down size, 'All Eyes on Me' keeps the trademark massive eight-inch diameter blooms for which this plant has become known. The blushing-pink blooms appear from the top to the bottom of a well-rounded plant with dark green leaves. A Proven Winners® perennial.



Hosta Shadowland® Love Story

This hosta will be a part of your garden "love story." Long, heart-shaped leaves have medium-green margins with chartreuse jetting that bleeds into creamy-white centers. The medio-variegation extends from the leaf tip to the petiole, flaring at the base of the leaf. A Proven Winners® perennial.



Nepeta 'Chartreuse on the Loose'

A perennial with season-long interest! The foliage provides three seasons of interest with bright chartreuse-yellow leaves. Clusters of lavender-blue flowers are produced just above the foliage and appear all summer long.



Phlox Luminary® Prismatic Pink

With its large, well-formed panicles of bubblegum-pink flowers with dark-pink eyes. This variety matches the height of the rest of the collection. A Proven Winners® perennial.



Sedum Rock 'N Grow® Midnight Velvet

A tall sedum in line with the rest of the Rock 'N Grow® Collection, 'Midnight Velvet' adds a new foliage and flower color combination. Rich, dark-purple leaves comprise the domed habit the moment they appear in spring. A Proven Winners® perennial.



***Ptilotus* 'Matilda'**

Loves the sun and heat! Plant in area that receives at least six hours of sun, but water when dry. 'Matilda' grows 20-32" (51-81 cm) tall and has a long vase life.



***Eucalyptus* 'Baby Blue Bouquet'**

Plant in full sun (at least six hours) and well-drained soil. Space 12-24" (30-61 cm) apart. Harvest when leaves start to feel leathery. Easily preserved with glycerin.



***Matthiola* 'Iron Apricot' (Stock)**

Tightly spaced florets on single, rigid, straight stems. Grows 24-28" (61-71 cm) tall. Plants may need support when a foot or taller in height. Grow in full sun (at least six hours per day) and well-drained, rich, moist soil.



***Campanula* Champion Series**

Uniform plant height with upward facing, bell-shaped flowers. Grows 27-35" (69-89 cm) tall. Plant in a sunny location (at least six hours) in well drained soil. Colors offered: Champion Blue, Lavender, Pink, Mix Champion II Deep Blue, Lilac, Pink, Rose, White (pictured)



'Rocket Golden' Snapdragon

Great for home garden color and cut flowers. Plant in sun (at least six hours). Space 14-18" (36-46 cm) apart. Grows 30-36" (76-91 cm) tall. Harvesting flowers will encourage additional blooming.



***Zinnia* Queeny Series**

Plant in a sunny spot (at least 6 hours of sun) Grows 18-24" (46-61 cm) tall. Show-stopping, long-lasting, dahlia-like blooms top sturdy, compact plants. Water regularly. Colors offered: Queen Lime, Lime Blush, Pure Orange, Lime Red (pictured), Queeny Lemon Peach, Lime Orange

Johnny's Selected Seeds

**Stock StoX® Series**

Innovative colors, high-quality performance—a standout in our trials. Single-stem or column-type stock for one-cut harvest. Sturdy, upright stems are comparable to the Iron Series. (Champagne, Antique Rose and Rose Pink)

**Cannes Light Bronze III Snapdragon**

Unique peachy-cantaloupe color. Group 3, well-suited for production under long days and high light. Despite the inclusion of “Bronze” in the name, Cannes Light Bronze III is a unique and beautiful cantaloupe color.

**Matthiola 'Early Arrow White' (Stock)**

Hi-double plants produce 90% or more double-flowering plants. From the same breeder as the Iron Series, 'Early Arrow White' is very similar to Iron in overall performance with very straight, strong stems and highly uniform plants.

Syngenta Flowers

**Dahlia Karma Caroline**

A brand new addition to the Karma series of dahlias specifically bred for cut flower production. 'Caroline' is a dynamic blend of purple, yellow, and pink colors on a strong, well-branch plant. Like all of the dahlias from Syngenta Flowers, 'Karma Caroline' is offered from an unrooted cutting (URC) and as rooted liners rather than tubers. There are many benefits to this including: 1) disease- and virus-free plant materials 2) easy to schedule and plant, and 3) produces uniform, productive, high-quality plants and flowers in the same time compared to a tuber.

Reach out to your favorite broker or young plant supplier to order and ask for dahlias from Syngenta Flowers!



Hydrangea Pinky Winky Prime™

Combine the beauty and reliability of the original with bigger, fuller flowers that age to an extra-vivid pink. Sturdy stems keep the blooms upright all summer.



Hydrangea Puffer Fish®

When Puffer Fish flowers, its foliage nearly disappears under the blizzard of blooms. A neat and unusual tuft of extra florets bursts from the tip of the flower in late summer.



Good Vibrations® Privet

Give your garden the mood boost it needs! Its tidy, glossy leaves each boast an emerald-green center surrounded by a mantle of cheery gold. Versatile shape and size.



Kindly™ Japanese Privet

The first-ever non-invasive selection of its kind, providing the versatility and durability of this landscape staple without the issues of conventional Japanese privets.



Flavorette™ Honey-Apricot Rose

Developed especially for the sweet, fruity taste and lush texture of its petals. Use them in sweets, salads, and infusions for a uniquely flavorful touch to summer meals. and treats.



Reminiscent® Coral Rose

Enjoy blousy, bowl-shaped flowers with deep pink-coral tones and an appealing copper center. Dark-green foliage accents the flowers and stays clean through the season. Deadheading not required for continuous blooms.



Syringa Bloomerang® Purpink™

Is it purple? Is it pink? Plant this in your garden and decide for yourself! It blooms in spring, along with other lilacs, then reblooms summer through fall. Disease resistant.



Chaenomeles Double Take Eternal White™

This quince is the longest-blooming flowering quince on the market. Its large double blooms appear in spring, and the show continues for months, often into early autumn.



Diervilla Kodiak Fresh®

Enjoy effortless color from spring through fall. New foliage emerges orange and red, maturing to lime green. Yellow flowers pepper the plant all summer.



***Achillea* Flowerburst Fruit Bowl**

A delightful mix that's as appealing as a bowl of freshly picked fruits. Straight from the Sahin 2021 collection, this blend showcases charming fruity hues in rose, apricot, yellow, and pink shades.



***Ammobium* grandiflorum**

A superstar in the garden and beyond, this delightful cut flower transforms into a stunning dried wonder. With its charming demeanor, it stands tall and proud, ready to grace your arrangements and bring a touch of everlasting beauty.



***Centaurea* 'The Bride'**

Adorned with large, pure-white blooms that exude the sweet scent of vanilla, it's a celebration of beauty and fragrance in one. Just like a bride's dreamy bouquet, 'The Bride' adds a touch of romance and charm to any space.



***Clarkia* Rosy Cheek-to-Cheek**

Nature's playful palette. This delightful mix boasts a quartet of pastel hues, as if nature dipped its brush in the softest colors. A charming annual cut flower, it dances through your garden from June to September.



***Didiscus* 'Lace Blue'**

A cut flower dream. Like a clear summer sky, *Didiscus* 'Lace Blue' enchants with its captivating azure hue. Blooms July–September.



***Didiscus* 'Lace Pink'**

Delicate as a blush on a summer morning, *Didiscus* 'Lace Pink' graces your bouquets with a touch of refined charm. Blooms July–September.



***Helianthus* 'Desert Sun'**

Like a desert sunrise captured in bloom, this sunflower radiates with creamy-yellow hues adorned with gentle maroon rings. Standing tall and branching, it blooms all summer long.



***Helianthus* 'Summer Lovin'**

Adding a fresh twist to our sunflower family, this newcomer boasts a light cream petal adorned with charming maroon rings that waltz across its petals. Stands tall and branching, grows to 180 cm.



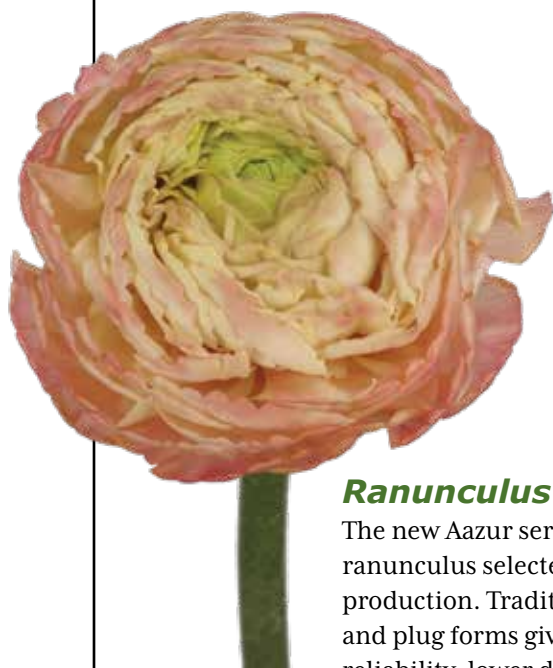
***Lathyrus* King Size Formula Mix**

This enchanting mix paints your garden with a kaleidoscope of nine vibrant hues. Hailing from the King Size series, it flaunts larger blossoms and long stems.



***Sorghum* 'Black Falcon'**

A true marvel for extra-large cut flower arrangements, this beauty captivates with its dense cone-shaped heads adorned in lustrous black. With a touch of enchantment, it stands tall at 150 cm.



***Ranunculus* F₁ Aazur Peach**

The new Aazur series is the first hybrid seed-raised ranunculus selected for professional cut flower production. Traditionally grown from corms, seed and plug forms give growers added supply chain reliability, lower disease risk, and reduced input costs. The Aazur series is available in a wide range of desirable shades and colors. 'Aazur Peach' is light pastel, useful in combination with many other colors. Bred in partnership for InFlora Cut Flowers by Versem.



***Dianthus* F₁ Amazon Lavender Magic**

Wonderful new color addition to the Amazon series. Flowers open white, mature to lavender and are held on strong, 18-36" stems. No vernalization required for flowering. Great as a filler or as a standalone. Bred by PanAmerican Seed.



***Lisianthus* F₁ Rosanne 1 Green II**

This Green II improvement brings better branching, less off-type flowers and a deeper green color than the original. Mid-large, double flowers have a strong fringed shape. Group 1 for winter to spring season harvest. Bred by Sakata.



***Lisianthus* F₁ Rosanne 2 Terracotta**

Rosanne 2 Terracotta brings an attractive, on-trend lighter brown flower color to your mix. Medium-sized, double flowers are well frilled. Less prone to tip burn. Group 2. Bred by Sakata.



***Lisianthus* F₁ Rosita 1 Light Pink**

A nice bright, light-pink addition of rose-shaped lisianthus. The double, mid-sized flower has a green center. Flowers are held on very strong stems on top of the plant. Less prone to tip burn. Group 1 for spring season harvest. Bred by Sakata.



Sorghum F₁ Prairie Pearls™ Bronze

This new ornamental sorghum produces flower stems about 36" tall, making it much more manageable than older varieties that flower at 8' tall. Green seed heads form 70–80 days after sowing, turning red about 10 days later. Great for both fresh and dried use. Also available in orange, cream, pink, and white. Bred in partnership for InFlora Cut Flowers by Richardson Seed Company.



Zinnia F₁ Uproar Deep Yellow and Uproar Scarlet

Uproar Deep Yellow and Uproar Scarlet are two long-awaited additions to the 2009 ASCFG Cut Flower of the Year winner, Uproar Rose. The new colors are showstoppers! These F₁ hybrids boast high yields, productivity, and reliably double flowers just like with Rose. Bred by Syngenta Flowers.

Matthiola StoX Champagne

StoX Champagne is the result of a breakthrough in matthiola breeding. Selection for double flowers can now be done at the seedling stage following a cold treatment, resulting in 100% double flowers in your finished production. Also available in six additional colors. Bred by Evanthia.





***Limonium Safora*™ Oshi Pink**

We saw Oshi Pink in person in Israel last summer and it opened our eyes to the world of limonium! They are wispy and airy but hold their own in design work. Very productive and tolerant of a wide range of temperatures, offering years of harvest.

Farmer Bailey



***Callicarpa* 'Magical Snowqueen'**

Isn't beauty berry purple? Well yes, except when it is white! This introduction from Kolster is covered top to bottom with plump, white, long-lasting berries. A great choice for Zone 7 and warmer. It is vigorous and blooms and sets fruit on the previous year's growth. Truly a must for autumn wedding work.



***Campanula* Evergreen Lavender**

The new line of Evergreen Campanula has double flowers with green streaks and they last for weeks! These tissue-culture plants are a bit more expensive than your usual campanula, but you can expect up to eight stems per plant. They need a winter chill to flower well as they are true biennials.



***Helleborus Hgc*® Ice N' Roses® Carlotta**

The hellebores from Heuger breeding are some of the best in the world. They are fast maturing, offering a harvest less than a year from transplant. The flowers are outward or upward facing on tall stems, so they don't get lost in designs. These hardy perennials will start your early season off with a bang.



***Delphinium* Highlander Mystery Sensation**

The Highlander series boasts the most double flowers ever seen on a delphinium. They come in a range of colors, often with a contrasting center. They love the same conditions as seed-grown strains and will rebloom after harvest. Cool-summer growers can expect these to become long-lived perennials.



Echinacea Fresco™ Apricot

The breeders at Terra Nova are known for their compact garden plants, but they have a few full-sized tricks up their sleeves. In addition to some stunning fully double echinacea, we are excited about this new semi-double variety. Perfect for market bouquets or high-end wedding designs.



Lisianthus Pucchino 3 Choco

We've been waiting for this one since 2019 when we saw it in Japan. Finally it has landed in the U.S. Single cup-shaped blooms offer a new style in lisianthus. The apricot/brown tones are sure to get noticed by high-end floral designers.



***Ilex xverticillata* 'Magical Cresgold'**

Kolster BV in Holland has been breeding woody plants for cutting for years, but getting them to the U.S. has been tricky. Now, with the support of Plants Nouveau, we are happy to bring these autumn all-stars to your farm. The peachy-orange berries will ripen just in time for Thanksgiving sales.



***Symphoricarpos* 'Magical Ruby Falls'**

We have a wide range of Snowberry coming to us for 2024 in a range of white, blush and PINK! These darlings of late summer and autumn come into fruit just as fall wedding season hits its peak. The plants are fast growing and easy to maintain.



***Limonium Sinuet™* Honey Apricot**

The breeders at Danziger have made some major improvements in tissue-culture statice! Not only are they tall, vigorous, and extremely productive, the designer colors are just what was missing in the color range.


Ranunculus Cloni™ Success Nuance®

One of several new introductions by Biancheri Creazioni of Italian Cloni™ ranunculus. 'Success Nuance' has a very light, powdery-pink color, and since it is a cloned ranunculus, every flower has the exact same color.


Ranunculus Cloni™ Pon Pon Alice®

According to the wizards at Biancheri, not a perfect Pon Pon ranunculus, as some flowers may not be as ruffled as others. But the result is an almost "romantic" show of color.


Ranunculus Cloni™ Moderna Salmone Scuro®

This is the first of a few early introductions of Biancheri interspecific line of cloned ranunculus.


Down Under Tulips®

Gorgeous, very large, double, fringed tulips. Several varieties with practically the same growing habits, make this a very special mix.


Double, Pollen-Less LxA Hybrid DeuceLily®

LxA hybrid lilies are a cross between *Lilium longiflorum* (trumpet-shaped blooms) and *L. asiaticum* (warm colors, upright-facing blooms). These are exceptional cut flowers.



Lily Pollen-Less Oriental Lily Best Regards®

Several new pollen-less oriental lilies will be introduced this year, including Best Regards®. From a distance, it looks like a regular oriental lily, but the anthers are sterile and do not release pollen. The challenge for us will be to make flower-buyers/consumers aware of this type of lily.



Anemone Mistral Tigre Vinato®

Several new Mistral anemones have been introduced this year, including a salmon-striped and this large, striped Tigre Vinato by Biancheri Creazioni. Very large flowers, striking colors. Unique and definitely eye-catching.



LxA Hybrid Lily Scansano®

Another gorgeous LxA hybrid. Pure white, easy to grow, and high bloom count. Excellent for floral arrangements.



OxT Montego Bay® Lily

This rusty-brown lily is a great new introduction. Along with its unique color, the growing habits are great and will make this a year-round workhorse.



Double-Flowering Oriental Lily Chardonnay®

Bred by Vletter & Den Haan. Double, pollen-less and light-scented. Chardonnay is pure white and is one of several new double oriental lilies.



Cut Flower Kale F₁ Crane Early Red

Developing color approximately one week earlier than the standard Crane Series, Crane Early Red also has a taller stem, 31½–33½ inches/80–85 centimeters about 8 inches/20 centimeters taller than Crane Red. Crane Early Red has sturdy stems and great vase life.



Cut Flower Kale F₁ Crane Early White

Colors approximately one week earlier and exhibits a slightly more open flower head than Crane White and has a stem length of 20–30 inches/50–76 centimeters. Stems are sturdy and have a great vase life.



Cut Flower Kale F₁ Crane Feather Snow

The newest addition to the Crane Feather series, Snow has a whiter center with no blush and is slightly later to color compared to Crane Feather King. The Crane Feather series is a creative way to add long-lasting texture to bouquets and arrangements.



Lisianthus F₁ Corelli II Pink

Vigorous variety featuring a large, double flower with elegant, fringed petals. This variety is also less sensitive to tip burning. The Corelli series is an ideal choice for florists due to its large, elegant flowers, great stem length, and strong stems.



Lisianthus F₁ Corelli Sugoi III White

This large flowered series stuns with heavily fringed, strong-petaled, well-shaped, highly doubled blooms. This unique flower shape lends itself to any florist arrangement or bouquet with its great resilience and vase life.



Lisianthus F₁ Corelli Sugoi I White

A high number of heavily fringed petals form a large, magnificent, well-shaped flower. This variety delivers sturdy stems on standard-height plants with good branching and a long vase life.

MEET OUR INSTRUCTORS:



Lisa Mason Ziegler



Dave Dowling



Ellen Frost



Jennie Love

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- Class Sneak Peek Video
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- ...changed the way we think about our flower farm P.N.
- ...shared a lifetime of experience. C.C.



TheGardenersWorkshop.com

The ASCFG Loses One of its Founders



Jim Nau, a longtime employee of the Ball Horticultural Company, passed away July 20 in Eldridge, Iowa. Jim and I were in Iowa State University's horticulture class of 1982. He always told me that he loved my

description of our time together in ISU hort and botany classes: "Jim, President of the undergraduate horticulture students club (the 'CoHorts') sitting ramrod straight in the front row and raising his hand to (correctly) answer every question, and me, slouched in the back row with a red pen, annoyedly correcting errors I found in the *Iowa State Daily*.' No wonder he walked directly from our graduation ceremony through Ball's front door, while I...did not."

Ball's *GrowerTalks* editor Chris Beytes provided a comprehensive description of Jim's accomplishments:

"Jim would spend his entire horticulture career (at Ball), holding various titles: Trial Planning Product Manager, New Varieties Manager, Trials Manager, Trials and Variety Manager, Trials and New Product Development Manager, and finally, Cultural Advisor and Corporate Archivist. But everyone inside and outside of Ball knew him as the man responsible for the trial grounds and gardens that were visited by many thousands of growers over the years. He could almost always be found in the gardens wearing his trademark hat, which earned him the nickname "Iowa Jim" at his retirement party.

Besides his creative ability with the gardens, Jim had extensive knowledge of crop culture of both annuals and perennials, and shared it through writing and public speaking. He was the author of

four editions of the popular *Ball Culture Guide* and the *Ball Perennial Manual*. Most recently, he lent his talents to the 19th Edition of the *Ball RedBook*, a project he contributed to for many years. Jim also had a love of the history of the industry. While in school he served as the historian of the horticulture club, and during his final days at Ball he was the corporate archivist, helping collect and catalog decades of irreplaceable artwork, catalogs and documents."

In addition to these accomplishments, in 1988 Jim somehow found the time and energy to support the nascent ASCFG. He arranged for the first meeting of the amorphous board of directors in West Chicago, ensured Ball's support for this new or-

"Besides his creative ability with the gardens, Jim had extensive knowledge of crop culture of both annuals and perennials, and shared it through writing and public speaking."

-Chris Beytes on Jim Nau

ganization, and served first as the Midwest (now North and Central) Regional Director, then President of the Board of Directors. Even as his career at Ball widened beyond cut flowers, he stayed in regular contact with John Dole and me, making sure that the Association, which would not have coalesced so (relatively) quickly without his support, was still flourishing.

Jim will be missed across the floriculture industry, and those in the ASCFG owe him a special debt of gratitude for his commitment to the organization. -Judy Laushman

Save the Date!

WHAT'S IN STORE FOR '24!

AN ASCFG SUPPLIER SHOWCASE

Connect with suppliers of the cut flower industry in the upcoming Zoom-based webinars, "What's in Store for '24." ASCFG members are invited to attend the complimentary events, during which vendors will discuss current and forthcoming products, tools, and other useful resources.

Members who donate to the ASCFG Research Foundation will also be eligible for a generous prize from a supplier. More details coming soon!



Monday, December 4
Tuesday, December 5
3:00 - 6:00 p.m. Eastern

Association of
Specialty
Cut Flower
Growers



Lennie Larkin
B-Side Farm
Warren, OR



Amanda Vanhoozier
Bishop Hill Farm Flowers
Coppell, TX



Marci Fellenbaum
Riverside Blooms
Washington Boro, PA

These members were inadvertently left off the Lifetime Member list in the July issue.

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Dave Dowling Scholarship

The ASCFG is dedicated to advancing the domestic cut flower industry by encouraging young people to consider cut flower production as a career. To foster this goal, every year the ASCFG awards \$1,000 each to two students interested in becoming cut flower growers, in addition to one-year ASCFG memberships and additional benefits.

DEADLINE: February 1, 2024

Who May Apply

The program is open to students working toward a two- or four-year degree, or a graduate degree, in horticulture or floriculture. Applicants must:

- Have at least one full year of studies remaining before finishing the degree.
- May re-apply if not awarded a scholarship from a previous application.
- Part-time students may be considered if they have taken at least 9 credits per year.

How to Apply

A complete application must include the following items. You can also learn about Dave Dowling and prior recipients on this page: <https://www.ascfg.org/outreach/dowling-scholarship/>

- Complete and submit the online form.
- Resumé
- Transcripts from each school attended after high school (unofficial transcripts are acceptable).
- One letter of recommendation from an employer, academic advisor, instructor, or advisor of a club in which you actively participate. Recommender should send letter directly to the ASCFG at MPO Box 268, Oberlin, Ohio, 44074.
- Personal statement (Not more than two pages) explaining the following:
 - Why the applicant is interested in cut flower production as a career.
 - Personal experience in floriculture, with emphasis on commercial cut flower production.
 - The applicant's plans to work in the commercial cut flower industry.

Successful applicants will be notified in Spring 2024.

Testimonial

"The ASCFG Scholarship is so much more than a check and a handshake...Not only has the ASCFG aided me in completing my degree and getting a head start on my loans, it has connected me with successful and knowledgeable farmers. My confidence and enthusiasm for the next steps toward my flower farming career are thanks to this wonderful organization."

-Daisy Sturgill, Prior Scholarship Recipient



Fundraising Report

Since 2003, the ASCFG Research Foundation has awarded more than fifty grants to qualified and innovative researchers. With these donations, we hope to grow our Grants program and to provide more opportunities to scholars who engage in floriculture research. The need for relevant research on the wide variety of cut flowers, methods of production and marketing, and agricultural economics is greater than ever.

ASCFG members generously donated \$13,982 during our 2023 Fund Future Flower Research Donation Drive, and by "Rounding up for Research" when they renewed their memberships this year. We appreciate your initiative and support.

In addition to the wonderful generosity shown by our members during the Fund Future Flower Research Donation Drive, the ASCFG Research Foundation hosted two webinars to showcase our suppliers. Funds raised through these webinars totaled \$6,450. We couldn't have done this without the support of our members and our vendors. Thank you so very much!

Thank you to our supplier donors!

American Takii
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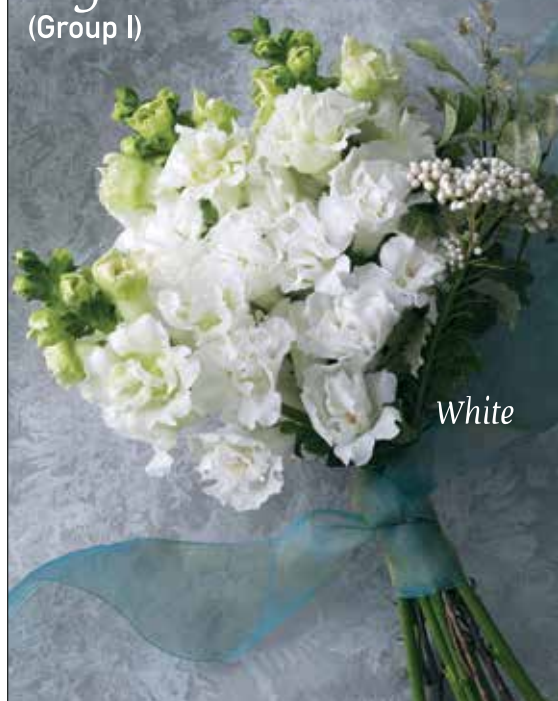
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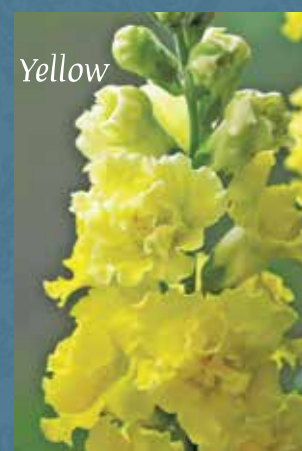
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Grow This Classic Flower With Ease, All Year Long

A Flower Farmer's Guide to Growing Lilies

Lilies are among the most recognizable flowers in the world. For decades, they have been top-selling cut flowers thanks to their long-lasting blooms, year-round availability, and a wide variety of fantastic, vibrant colors. Today, their popularity among cut flower growers is on the rise too, partly because growing lilies is not especially labor-intensive. This easy-to-grow, affordable crop is a standout in fresh bouquets across the country.

Most Commonly Used Lilies in the Floral Industry

- *Lilium longiflorum* is mainly used in pot culture and is known as the Easter Lily in the US.
- **Oriental Hybrids** 'Stargazer' is the most well-known Oriental but they are practically out of production because of newer, superior varieties being introduced. Orientals are available in single and double flowering forms and new pollen-less varieties have been introduced as well.
- **OxT Hybrids** were created by crossing Oriental lilies with tetraploid lilies. OxTs have impressively large, fragrant, and long-lasting blooms. Because of their much stronger root system and performance, they are recommended for summer production.
- **Asiatic Hybrids** are well known in the trade. They are easy to grow, and have no fragrance. While the flowers are smaller than Orientals, they have a very high bud count.
- **LxA Hybrids** are the most popular lilies used in floriculture today. They are a cross between Asiatic lilies and *Lilium longiflorum*. With no scent, LxA hybrids are perfect for customers sensitive to strong fragrances but who want a long vase life, color options, and upward-facing flowers. Because they generally outperform Asiatic lilies, LxA lilies have replaced most Asiatic lilies. LxA hybrids are truly perennial, even in some southern states, and are easy to grow. New varieties are on the market with double flower forms and without pollen.

Ordering

Making a minimum order can be challenging for smaller operations. Luckily, many growers offer mixed crates of 400 bulbs in 12 or more different colors and varieties that will bloom in succession. "We offer mixed LaA crates to cater to the needs of smaller and mid-sized farms," says Hank Onings, General Manager of Onings Holland, Inc. "We take the guesswork out of ordering by creating a mixture of pre-chilled, ready-to-plant bulbs that will bloom in succession for three weeks."

Lily Bulbs From New Zealand and Chile

Need lilies for early spring? Ask your supplier about lily bulbs from the southern hemisphere. They make it possible to grow a lily crop just in time for Mother's Day. A Mother's Day crop of Orientals could take up to 18 weeks to grow which means only long-stored Dutch bulbs could be used. And, they can't handle the cold as well as the New Zealand and Chilean bulbs.

"We Fake Winter, You Fake Spring."

Ordering frozen bulbs fakes the winter deep freeze, giving the bulbs the time they need to chill before growing. Once planted, grow them under shade cloth to simulate the shorter days of spring. "Stem roots are the most important part of the lily, but these develop after planting," says Onings. A cool, slow start will give the plant a chance to develop a strong root system. Rapid growth may cause a plant to starve because it does not have the roots to absorb nutrients. Since stem roots are just below the surface, moist and cool conditions are critical and can be provided by (heavy) shade cloth.

Box Cultivation

Box cultivation of lilies is becoming the standard for most lily growers. It enables growers to produce lilies much more efficiently.

Advantages of Box Cultivation:

- Bulbs can be planted using a planting-line
- Pre-rooting (indoor, in cooler or cool locations) will improve root development
- Reduction of forcing time in greenhouses, more cycles in the same space
- An improved quality flower, especially when the pre-rooting method is used
- Most ideal growing media can be created, for instance, coconut fiber or soil mix
- Ground diseases will not spread in a box
- Soil disinfection can be provided later and at a different location, faster rotation, higher production per square foot
- Easier weed control



Disadvantages of Box Cultivation:

- Labor intensive
- Extra expense for plant medium

Pre-rooting Method

- After planting the lilies in boxes, boxes may be palletized and stored in a refrigerated cooler, cooler truck, warehouse, or shade structure. The ideal storage temperature is 49°F
- A slow start/sprouting of the bulb will help root development. At 49°F, root development occurs relatively faster than sprout development. Your bulb supplier can deliver your bulbs frozen, "We Fake Winter, You Fake Spring"
- Good root development will result in a better uptake of nutrients, stronger and healthier plants, and longer vase life

Production Notes

- Orientals are slow growing, Orl's are a bit faster, and both are scented
- Orl's perform best in summer due to sturdier root systems
- Asiatic lilies and LxA hybrids are relatively fast growing, and do NOT have a scent
- Lilies are perennial and will regrow. However, Orientals do not regrow consistently once the stem is cut
- LxAs require the least amount of winter chill and are considered perennial even in some southern states

Outdoor Cultivation

The best time to plant outdoors is after the potential frost has passed. The latest time to plant depends on the region's climate during the growing season. Harvesting should be completed before the average temperature drops below 52°F for Orientals and Orl's and 42°F for LxA hybrids, as long as it isn't for an extended period. Be sure to plant 4" deep and cover with shade cloth for the first 4-5 weeks. Raised beds are recommended. LxA hybrids are the easiest to grow

outdoors and the most perennial. In some cases, it may be more economical to replace old bulbs with new ones. When growing in poly houses, make sure to provide plenty of air flow.

When the Bulbs Arrive

Do not allow the bulbs and roots to dry out before planting. When bulbs arrive frozen, store them at about 40°F for a few days until planting. It is also important to open the bags to avoid ethylene damage. Plant density depends on several factors such as soil type, time of year, and bulb size. A bulb supplier should be able to help with specifics. In general, plant LxAs (size 12/14) 5" apart. Orientals and Orl's (size 16/18) should be planted 6" apart.

Harvesting

It is best to harvest lilies when the first two or three buds show color, when the buds look puffy but before opening. During bunching, it's important to remove the bottom 4" or so of leaves for good hygiene. It's best not to have leaves in the water. Immediately after bunching, store the lilies in water in a cooler set to 35 to 41°F. Ship flowers chilled in boxes or in water. Stamens can be removed easily just as the bud opens, they don't give off pollen at that time. Later, the pollen can be easily brushed off. Don't use water or it will set the stain.

Popularity Drives New Breeds

As lilies continue to grow in popularity, so does the demand for new breeding work. LxA and Orl's lilies are relatively new to the trade and now double lilies are taking the floral industry by storm. The fully double blooms are exquisite and last even longer in the vase, demanding a higher price. There are already lilies on the market that have no fragrance or pollen, traits that can be important to end consumers. Stay tuned for more new varieties every year.



NORTHEAST

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Jennifer Marks

Trademarks Flower Farm
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Seasons of entrepreneurship

Public service announcement: It's okay and totally normal to have seasons of entrepreneurship on your flower farm!

The world of social media leads us to believe that we must be going full force, giving 100% disciplined effort to our flower farms every day—no matter what.

When I first started my flower farm, I would have agreed with that wholeheartedly. I had huge visions of developing a massive farm, because I wanted to feel successful and accomplished. For many years, I worked tirelessly with little to no “work-life” balance, running purely on adrenaline and dreams. I roguishly believed in working your nose to the grindstone—no matter what—because I wanted to see my business succeed so badly. Thanks to that season of my life, the business has definitely been a success, but the original grand vision of building a huge farm has unexpectedly changed over time.

I always swore to myself that I would never allow anything to get in my way of achieving that original vision of success. However, as the business grew and I hired more employees I learned a lot about myself. I realized that managing people and taking on a leadership role is a lot more difficult than I thought. I learned that I prefer working in small groups or independently rather than with large numbers of people. I learned that, for me, farming is stressful enough without adding more stressful events onto my plate.

As I learned these things, the business vision shifted to a smaller, more focused avenue, where I had more work-life balance, had other hobbies, and leisurely spent time with friends and family—another season of my entrepreneurship journey.



Now again I find the seasons changing for the flower farm. Last summer when I found out I was pregnant, friends warned me that my priorities would change once our baby was here. I, of course, planned on caring for my child, but resented my friends for thinking I could ever change the current business vision that I had worked so hard for! I (naively) thought that I could simply carry on working just as I always had, while simultaneously providing great care for my newborn.

Then, in April, when my son was finally born, my priorities completely rearranged themselves (you can all tell me you told me so!). I found myself wanting to stay snuggled inside with my baby, instead of itching to get out and harvest flowers. In preparation for the expansion of our family, I cut back on many of the flower farm's demands: we stopped booking weddings and events, retail workshops, and cancelled our summer CSA program. However, I found myself wanting to cancel nearly everything else as well and just focus on my role as a new mom (I had no idea how awesome being a mom was!). I hired extra help as I stepped back from the business, and had to let go of a lot of things I strongly held on to in the past. I developed systems that both give me space and empowered others to do a good job



MID-ATLANTIC

Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey,
Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia



Dave Delbo

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executing tasks. This transition has been surprisingly easy, as I am learning to focus on what really matters to me during this season of my life.

I am looking forward to letting go of continuous growth of my flower farm business, and to rely heavily on delegating tasks to others. I am excited to simply settle into what I love to do and want to do, without the pressure of always expanding markets or making more money. I plan to continue to focus on growing a limited variety of cut flowers for just two main sales outlets, allowing me both finances and time to spend with my adorable son and my family. Cutting back is also giving me the space to learn to love my flower farm in an entirely new way again!

I am sharing my experience because I now realize that it is totally normal to have different seasons of your entrepreneurship journey, just as much as having different seasons of your life. We are all on our own unique journeys. Social media and farming culture convinces us that we must work our tails off year-round, that we must have 50,000+ followers on Instagram, and tons of sales in order to be successful. But the reality is that you can make your flower farm whatever you want, for whatever purpose you want, and hold your own unique vision of success—and that is the beauty of this profession.

If you find yourself itching to change something on your own flower farm—do it! Don't be afraid to make changes: it's your life, and you should live it in the way it makes you the happiest in the moment. The flexibility and freedom to create a life we love and to shift that vision whenever we see fit is pretty darn amazing, don't you think?

The 2023 growing season is winding down for most of us in the Mid-Atlantic Region. As usual, it was a challenging year. The month of May was probably the driest on record for our area in Pennsylvania. We received about two-tenths of an inch of rain for the entire month. This stunted my early successions of sunflowers causing them to have disfigured blooms and to branch on short, unusable stems. Also, direct-seeded sunflowers were slow to germinate or didn't even germinate at all. Of course, this could have been remedied with drip tape irrigation or sprinklers. However, our only water supply is our house well and we were already using a huge amount to water four greenhouses/tunnels and to transplant flowers to the field. The beginning of June brought 5 inches of rain and it kept raining often through August, making it difficult to get later successions of sunflowers and transplants into the field.

In July, my large delivery truck began having mechanical problems. After a few weeks of using our personal car to make deliveries to florists and even a couple of days using two cars, I had to rent a U-Haul.

Some of the other problems I have encountered in over 40 years of growing flowers include having a greenhouse heater go out in early January and freezing the young seedlings. The plug trays of lisianthus, eucalyptus, and delphinium were frozen solid when the temperature dipped to 21 inside the greenhouse. Luckily, I lost only the eucalyptus. The delphinium and lisianthus both survived and I was able to get more eucalyptus seeds so all was good. However, ever since then, I make sure my greenhouse alarm is working as soon as I start my greenhouse in the winter.

Other greenhouse issues include a windstorm ripping the plastic off of my first 100-foot greenhouse back in the 1990s, and a catastrophic ice storm that affected a large area of Pennsylvania and neighboring states. On Valentine's Day in 2011, several commercial greenhouses collapsed in the area after several inches of freezing rain and ice accumulated on the structures. My greenhouse partially collapsed. However, I was able to use it that spring and it

was replaced the following year. Since then, I support some of my weaker structures with 2x4s under the purlins during the winter months.

Fortunately, power outages of extended length in my area are uncommon. A generator is a good insurance plan in case you do lose power and need to heat a greenhouse in the winter months. I can recall only one time that I had to hook up a generator to run the heaters in the greenhouses.

In the farming business, you are always trying to get crops into the field as early as you can. You plant the young plugs into the field in late April after the forecast shows no more frost in the future. After a couple of days, the forecast changes and you are now under a frost or freeze warning. Time to dig out the row covers and cover all the sensitive plants. And of course, it can be an early frost in the fall that can be costly to your bottom line; on September 19, 2020, the temperature dropped to 33 degrees and a very light frost damaged the cockscomb just enough to make them unsalable.

This year, my dry spell was the month of May. But most years, it gets dry in Pennsylvania during the hot summer months of July and August, when most flowers are in full bloom and require a large amount of water to grow properly. Drip tape is commonly used to water plants and conserve water by not watering the pathways.

The other side of the coin is excessive rainfall. Several years ago, a thunderstorm came through the area, and we received 5 inches of rain in a few hours. This washed out rows of biodegradable mulch that had just been laid, along with the plants that were planted there, as well as the state highway below my house. There really isn't any solution to this unless you are growing exclusively in tunnels. Most years, we get at least one severe thunderstorm with gusty winds that will damage a succession or two of sunflowers.

We do not net any flowers with the exception of lisianthus and flowering cabbages. For us, the gamble to not net outweighs the extra labor and expense to net every flower in case of severe weather. Maybe once in a decade, central Pennsylvania will receive the remnants of a hurricane in August or September that will flatten sunflowers and other top-heavy flowers like cockscomb.

About a decade ago, my well pump stopped working in the late spring. With four greenhouses/tunnels, that is a major problem. Thankfully, I was able to hook up about 500 feet of garden hose to my neighbor's house and water the greenhouses until I could replace the pressure regulator on the well pump.



Top: Dahlia field at Butterbee Farm. Right: Laura Beth Resnick explains to attendees how she uses her high tunnels during the farm tour of Butterbee Farm.

And even after flowers are harvested, things can go wrong. Several times, I have had my cooler stop working and had to replace a fan motor or some other part. I also have had a display cooler freeze the flowers inside the cooler.

I won't even go into the issues with disease or insects and critters eating everything that they do. But the worst-case scenario would be if you were hurt and unable to farm for a period of time. Fortunately, I have been lucky and have not been hurt during the growing season.

Finally, the Mid-Atlantic Region had four farmers open up their fields and greenhouses to members by hosting a Farm Tour this year. A huge thank you to Jean Howard of CA&J Farm; Liz Faucher of Leap Frog Flower Farm; Jessica Hall of Harmony Harvest Farm; and Laura Beth Resnick of Butterbee Farm. I hope you had the opportunity to visit at least one of these farms. The 2023 is being held November 6-8, in St. Louis. This is 3 days of a learning experience you cannot get anywhere else. Start the conference off with a farm tour of Urban Buds, then an evening of socializing with a couple hundred like-minded farmers from around the U.S., Canada, and the world. Then it is two days of seminars and presentations from some of the best in the business. And Tuesday evening, we will celebrate the 35th anniversary of the ASCFG with a banquet. I will be there! Will you?



Hellebores, geum, and mockorange at Flourish Flower Farm.



SOUTHEAST

Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee



Nicolette Irving

Flourish Flower Farm
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Because Fall is the perfect time for us Southern growers (and likely folks in other regions too!) to plant perennials—and with this being the issue of the *Quarterly* which contains new varieties—I wanted to dedicate this regional report to our favorite perennial crops.

I moved my farm operation three times (which I do not necessarily recommend, but you do what you have to do to get started) before finding our forever home about 5 years ago. In the early days, I remember longing for the day when I could invest in perennials and my wish list was a mile long! I've slowly been adding perennials over the past 5 years and have achieved an almost even split of perennials and annuals. Each year I am hoping to skew more towards harvesting from perennial crops versus annual crops. Although perennials are more of a financial investment initially, their

value increases each year as they become more productive and require less maintenance.

Here are my top eight favorite perennial crops for profitability and value as a cut flower: PeeGee hydrangea, *Hydrangea paniculata grandiflora*; eastern ninebark, *Physocarpus opulifolius*; mockorange, *Philadelphus coronarius*; *Baptisia*/false indigo 'Purple Smoke'; *Helleborus*/lenten rose, the Wedding Party series, and 'Ice n' Roses'; bridalwreath spirea, *Spiraea prunifolia*; *Geum*, the Cocktail series; Peonies, 'Coral Charm,' 'Duchesse de Nemours,' 'Sarah Bernhardt,' 'Karl Rosenfield,' 'Etched Salmon', and 'Lady Alexandra Duff.'

I asked the members in our Region to share some of their favorite varieties; here is what they said:

"I think perennials are great in cut flower arrangements and so enjoy having them in my garden along with the annuals. I think this year my favorite perennial is Maltese cross. It has a pretty good vase life and is a steady cut and come again flower, adding more blooms with each cut. Feverfew would be another good one and has been very prolific this season, blooming still into the hot summer days. I try to add a new annual and a new perennial each season to my

garden and enjoy testing them out to see which one will be good for cut flowers and an asset to the garden.” *Virginia Rudnicki, Flora Berry Farm, Berry, Kentucky*

“Mountain mint *Pycnanthemum muticum*: I don’t think I can say enough good things about this perennial. Hardy, disease and insect resistant, excellent filler or foliage, great smells, long stems, good for pollinators. Every year I wish that I had 1,000 bed feet of it! Yarrow, another unsurprising favorite. I love every color including the extra tall and sturdy species *filipendulina* ‘Coronation Gold’. It always comes in bloom for me during that spring to summer transition time when things can be uncertain. Variegated Solomon’s seal - don’t get me wrong, I love the regular green too, for those nice long stems but the variegated is extra special, especially in bridal bouquets! It comes in at the perfect time when foliage is greatly needed! Coral/snowberry (*Symphoricarpos*): last year we harvested fewer than 20 stems from our young plants and our florists were so excited! Plants are looking great so far this year, hoping for a nice harvest when the mums start blooming! Ninebark *Physocarpus* ‘Ginger Wine’: Planted fall of 2021, these babies are already massive and have saved my butt a couple times when foliage was low or I needed that pop of burgundy. Really looking forward to it pulling double duty as a windbreak and great cut as the years progress.” *Alexis Sheffield, Wild Roots, Harrodsburg, Kentucky*



“Peonies, dahlias, mountain mint, veronica, and yarrow. We are also focused on increasing our perennial percentage on the farm.” *Sherry Kelly, Chatuge Springs Flower Farm, Hayesville, North Carolina*

“I started planting perennials as soon as we bought this farm over 25 years ago and it sure has paid off. My favorites and that we have prospered most from are of course peonies, but also on the list for our area are baptisia, daffodils, alliums, hellebore, veronicastrum, liatris, gladiolus, and dahlias. Not to mention the shrubs, which would be a whole other list!” *Teresa Biagi, Hazelfield Farm, Wheatley, Kentucky*

“A couple of my favorite perennials in Zone 7B are crocosmia and asparagus. I use asparagus greens literally from



Above: Barn of Chapel Hill in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Left: Bouquet from Chatuge Springs Flower Farm.

spring until fall. The crocosmia seem to hold up great in arrangements and last longer than other summer flowering perennials.” *Ashlie Harper, Camille’s Cut Flowers, Rome, Georgia*

“My big perennial crop is peonies; I have a field of several hundred. As I’m sure you know, bloom time is very short, but they are gorgeous and a customer favorite! Since we host weddings on the farm in April and May, and provide the floral design work, we actually don’t harvest or store many peonies in marshmallow stage other than what is needed for Mother’s Day. We primarily just cut straight from the field each week and use those peonies in the floral design for that week’s weddings. Plus, being able to take photos in the peony field (which we allow only booked couples to do) is a huge selling point! For Mother’s Day, I’ve tried several sales methods. This year, the day before Mother’s Day we did a combination of on-farm peony bouquet pick-ups and a pop-up at a busy outdoor shopping center in Cary, which was a huge success!” *Kara Brewer, Barn of Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, North Carolina*

“It’s my hope to be 50 percent perennials soon! I love penstemon, PowWow echinaceas, sea oats, mountain mint, lupine, Brandywine hellebore, Solomon seal, astilbe, and *Rudbeckia triloba*!” *Abigail Moffitt, Bloom WNC, Black Mountain, North Carolina*

NORTH AND CENTRAL

Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan,
Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska,
North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota,
Wisconsin, and Wyoming

**Susan Rockwood**

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Several years ago I remember feeling relief and validation when I saw something Mimo Davis of Urban Buds posted on social media. It was mid-season and she was giving up on a few trays of seedlings she never got around to planting. Moving and watering them to keep them alive beyond their prime always stressed me out. Obviously, there is time and expense in those trays, but at some point, it's time to stop looking at them and get rid of them. To find out that an experienced farmer like Mimo had to dump whole trays that never got in the ground and I wasn't the only procrastinator felt like freedom—thank you, Mimo!

As I was reflecting on the end of the 2023 season, I came up with a list of things I can/should do better next season. I'm pretty sure the list will resonate with other farmers and in reality it could be my list almost every year. Here are some of the things I need to work on and do better next season:



Top: Alison Bakke of Pink Moon Farm, Minnesota. Bottom: Marielena Acorda-Shaner of Boda Bayfield, Wisconsin (left)

- Get all the trays of plugs in the ground at the opportune time. In order to do this I need to hire enough help to reduce the number of weeks we spend planting so plants don't bolt in their trays and get stressed. This year we delayed planting due to extreme heat and drought. As a result, many varieties never fully recovered once they were in the ground and many plants ended up blooming shorter than normal.
- Fertilize regularly and early as plants are forming buds. I ran out of Neptune's Harvest fish and seaweed emulsion and never got around to buying a new jug of it. I also have a hard time finding worm castings in local stores so never got around to brewing compost tea.
- Be diligent about pinching early, especially strawflowers, celosia, and dahlias to get branching plants and thinner usable stems.
- Cut back entire beds that have potential to rebloom a second time during the season after the first blooms



Delay in planting resulted in short-stemmed gomphrena.

are spent. Snapdragons, foxglove, and eryngium will produce a second flush for us if cut back mid-season.

- Prepare a more exact crop plan to facilitate planting efficiency and bed preparation in the fall and spring. I always seem to find space for annuals, but end up short on dedicated bed space for perennials.

I know these are pretty basic principles for a flower farmer, however after nine seasons, I am still working on getting these tasks accomplished. It's also not an exhaustive list as there are many more things most of us are learning and working on such as soil health, cover cropping, and weed management. But in case you also struggle to get these basics done each season, know that you are not alone. All we can do is try to do better each season. Keep going, keep growing!

I hope to see many of you in St. Louis in November at the ASCFG National Conference. Two first-time attendees from the North and Central Region are Alison Bakke of Pink Moon Farm in Minnesota and Marielena Acorda-Shaner of Boda Bayfield in Wisconsin. When I asked them why they signed up for the conference this year, they both said they realize how important it is to meet and get to know other flower farmers, and that the ASCFG provides this opportunity. Following farmers on social media isn't a substitute for getting to know other farmers in person, and the conference is a great place to make those connections. Look for them in St. Louis and say hi!

SOUTH AND CENTRAL

Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, and Utah



Shanti Rade

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"The real test is not whether you avoid this failure, because you won't. It's whether you let it harden or shame you into inaction, or whether you learn from it; whether you choose to persevere." -Barack Obama

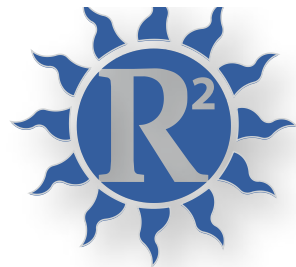
I am writing this in the middle of August, or Slogust as I've heard it called. It's been a rough growing season around here. Late May brought hail and floods. Late June brought a hard frost, one month after our expected last frost date, followed the next day by 95 degrees. July brought unprecedented heat waves (even for Arizona), and perhaps worst of all we have had severe grasshopper pressure most of the summer. It has felt like one blow after the next, mostly out of our control.

It seems like almost every season has some challenge or other. Covid closures, labor shortages, inflation, heat, drought, excessive rain, disease, pest pressure. The list feels endless. I know a lot of other farmers are struggling especially hard this year, too.

I can't seem to decide if every year is this hard and I just can't remember, or if this year is much worse than usual. For me to really know, I have to look at the numbers. I know it isn't all about the money, but that does say a lot. Comparing weekly farmers' market sales to the same week last year (thank you Square for making this easy) we are consistently down by \$1,000-\$2,000 a week. For our bookkeeping purposes everything funnels into QuickBooks (wholesale, retail, stuff sold on other platforms) so looking at a year-to-date income comparison this year vs. last—oof, that's also not looking good. Income is way down, while labor and other expenses are the same or in some cases much higher. Of course, we have still had some good crops come in and there is still time for things to turn around, but all in all this means we may not turn a profit this year or even be able to pay ourselves.

When well-meaning friends and customers ask "How's your season going?", expecting a light-hearted answer, it's hard to find a truthful statement that isn't a complete downer. Sometimes I have to just gloss it over, just to not get de-





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Left: Our new mural. Right: A flower block looking good and finally coming out of all the struggles of this season.

pressed. The hardest part has been writing the weekly CSA newsletter, trying to explain all the challenges in a way that doesn't sound like complaining. And I do get tired of my perpetual apologies. A true CSA in a tough year should be the thing that buoys you. But honestly, I find it so gut wrenching not to fully deliver on what's been promised. This is mainly true for our vegetable CSA boxes, not so much the flowers this year.

But in the middle of all the challenges this year are the surprising silver linings. I've been grappling with how to distill what I am feeling about this season and I came up with two words. "Resilience"—the capacity to withstand and recover quickly from difficulties. And "grit"—passion and perseverance toward a goal despite being confronted by significant obstacles and distractions. I am feeling grateful that 20 years into business, this isn't the worst year we have ever had. A bad year won't sink us. I am also grateful that in good years we have invested in equipment, paid off land, made business upgrades, and built a nest egg for the not so good years. But I have come to see that the hard times actually teach you too. Here are the lessons for me.

- **Collaboration.** Tapping into relationships we've built with other farmers to help fulfill gaps in production. While we generally don't buy anything in, this year we have purchased some vegetables to fill our CSA boxes and some flowers from other growers to meet our wholesale orders. It feels good to support our friends and it's a relief to lean on others when you need it. We aren't meant to do this all alone.
- **Diversification.** Appreciating the diverse nature of our farming operation. Sometimes I lament our inefficiency with so many different crops and different sales channels. But this year, our production is split between veggies and flowers, on two different properties, greenhouse and field, wholesale and retail. All of these factors have given us a little more wiggle room to not implode when so many things go wrong.
- **Ecosystem Perspective.** Focusing on our whole farm ecosystem helps me not look at the cash crop loss as the only important factor. I am seeing the other things that it takes for our farm to thrive. Pollinator habitat, flood mitigation, cover cropping, personal enjoyment areas. We've got a lot of work to do.
- **Mental Health.** One of the biggest lessons for me when things are hard is learning to decouple the success of the farm with my own self-worth as a person/farmer. I can't control the weather nor many other things in farming. But it sure can be a blow to the ego when you see yourself only as a farmer and the farm's not doing well. It has taken me decades and lots of emotional processing, but I am getting better at recognizing that my self-worth doesn't need to follow the trajectory of the farming season.
- **Sharing your story.** As hard as it is to tell people things aren't going great, I do find the response to sharing the reality to be one of love and support. I write an (almost) weekly newsletter for the general public as well as another one for our CSA members. Showing people the hard stuff, explaining what the

causes of crop loss are and what tools you have (or don't have) to deal with it makes them feel included and increases their empathy and understanding. Even our most ardent supporters are still pretty clueless as to what it takes to farm physically, emotionally, financially. But digging into the highs and lows each week is generally really illuminating for all.

- **Finding the positives.** As we start to pull out of the worst of the season, it is nice to feel excited again. Some crops are finally doing better. We've replanted a ton of stuff and we are gearing up for fall and winter production. It helps a lot to farm with a partner who supports you in all the ways and a caring and dedicated crew. I am sorry that this quarterly report is a bit of a downer. Then again, is it? If it brings you any solace or consolation for your own farming challenges this year, then it's worth it. We are all here getting through it, supporting each other along the way.

I am gearing up for my ASCFG Farm Tour in a few weeks. I have been kind of anxious about showing off my farm to a group of my peers. I'd be anxious in a good year, but even more so when things aren't their best. I was talking to a farmer friend the other day, and expressing my trepidation about this tour, feeling a bit of impostor syndrome creep in. She said the best thing to me. She said she learns something from me every time we talk (of course the same is true for me learning from her). And she reminded me that I always bring the honesty, no matter what we are talking about and that is the realness that she craves. So I have come to terms with it. Honest is the only way I know how to be and that's just what I will show people on my farm tour. And I have a new feeling of excitement to do just that. Not to say we aren't attempting to spruce up a few eyesores around the place at the same time.

This is my last Regional Report. I want to extend a huge thank you to you all for allowing me to serve as the Regional Director for the last 6 years. I am so grateful to all the people I have been able to work with and learn from in ASCFG. I don't know a more committed and generous group of folks than y'all. I have missed a few deadlines for the *Quarterly* (I'm so sorry, Judy.) but I sure have attended a ton of Zoom meetings. Thanks to the ASCFG staff for being amazing, always. I plan on being active in the organization in other capacities for the foreseeable future. I look forward to seeing so many of you at this year's conference in St. Louis and so many more conferences to come.

WEST AND NORTHWEST

Alaska, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington



Erin McMullen

Rain Drop Farm
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One of our most versatile crops is dahlias. So many of us grow them, and love them, that I wanted to give an overview of my favorites for different uses, and what we've found to be the best harvest and postharvest stages and processes.

First, there are plenty of people out there who could be considered "experts" and I am not going to include myself in those numbers. Like most crops, dahlias are pretty site specific. There are regions and microclimates where they just grow really well, and it's easy. But there are always struggles. We are fortunate to have a pretty good climate and favorable winter conditions that allow us to not only overwinter, if we so choose, but also to plant early in the spring allowing for blooms by June.

I heard a lot of chatter this last growing season from people asking about the best way to process and hold dahlias, so I wanted to quickly touch on our methods, why, what and how we harvest the dahlias from our almost 50,000 plants.

Our markets consist of predominantly wholesale markets, with some grocery thrown in for good measure.

The first thing we consider when planning our dahlia crop is use and form. For grocery, ball style dahlias are our top performers. Generally speaking, they have a sturdier form, bolder colors, and longer vase life, making them a shoo-in for success in our grocery accounts.

Some of our top dahlias for grocery are 'Ivanetti', 'Cornel Bronze', 'Audrey Grace', 'Clearview Daniel', 'Wine Eyed Jill', 'Sunny Boy', 'Pink Sylvia', 'Hillcrest Suffusion', 'Maarn', 'Sweet Love', and 'Sebastian'.

For wholesale design customers, there's an endless array of shapes and colors, so we try to stay up on color trends and do extensive trialing on new varieties before we invest heavily in something that may be beautiful in the field, but short lived in the vase, or have poor form (i.e. downward-facing blooms or easily bruised petals). Design dahlias have a little more forgiveness on vase life, as most of them aren't needing to last for a week but for only a day or two.

For design work, we love ‘Ryecroft Jan’, ‘Orsett Beauty’, ‘Peaches ‘n Cream’, ‘Brown Sugar’, ‘Cornel Bronze’, ‘Beatrice’, ‘Rock Run Ashley’, ‘Chocolate Karma’, ‘Jowey Winnie’...there are so many, it’s hard to list them all!

Now to the nitty-gritty—harvest. The most important thing is stage of harvest. We were fortunate to be a part of an extensive dahlia trial that was facilitated through the Seattle Wholesale Growers Cooperative, by Diane Szukovathy. Diane spent weeks over the summer of 2020 cataloging most of the varieties that our member growers had available, and running trials on stage of harvest, postharvest treatment, and the effects of both of those on vase life. The results have been hugely beneficial in helping us to identify winners and losers,



as well as proper stage of harvest, which though similar for many varieties can vary greatly.

We think of dahlia blooms in 5 stages, 1 being just barely open and 5 being fully blown. Ideal harvest for most varieties is in the 2-3 stage. I’ve included a rudimentary photo of ‘Hillcrest Suffusion’ with the stages marked. We harvest in the 2-3 stage for wholesale and grocery on this one.

After harvest we put our dahlias into clean buckets with fresh water that we treat with Chrysal #2 holding solution and CVBN gerbera tabs. They go straight into our cooler, held at 40 degrees, and are delivered on a refrigerated truck, in water, direct to our wholesale markets four times a week.

I get this question a lot, “Do we dip our stems in hot water?” NO! We absolutely do not. We have found that, first of all, there is just no feasible way to process the thousands of bunches that leave our farm each week during the season that way. Secondly, the hot water breaks down the cells of



the stem wall, and that's no good. That makes the water dirty, it blocks up the "straw" of the stem, and we've had nothing but bad consequences the few times we've tried. I often get pushback on this, because there are some very large farms that recommend it, but it's important to remember that our goals are different than a home gardener's, and those recommendations aren't made with professional flower farmers in mind.

Dahlias are one of my favorite crops and I could go on and on, so please reach out if you'd like to see more info on any part of the process. Do be cautioned that there are reputable sellers out there, and there are plenty of people who have jumped onto the tuber sales train as a quick means to cash. Be sure to vet your sources, look for virus-free tubers or cuttings whenever possible. Try new things—you never know where the next best dahlia is waiting. And most of all, just enjoy the beauty of these amazing flowers!

CUT FLOWER PLUGS

Campanula	Eucalyptus	Snagdragons
Celway Delosia	Lisianthus	Stock
Delphinium	Marigold Anchi	Sunflowers
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Sarah Kistner

Stone Meadow Gardens
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Do you have an email list? I know this feels like just one more thing to clutter your never-ending to-do list! But with the slower season (for many of us) just around the corner, now is a great time to think about your marketing strategy and how you can make the most of your time this winter.

Social Media Then and Now

Raise your hand if you've spent the last decade building a following on social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook. These platforms have been our megaphones, helping us spread the word about our businesses, cultivate our brand, and forge customer relationships. For many of us, social media has served as our primary marketing channel and has been critical in making actual sales. But, if you have been on the platform long enough, you've probably noticed a change. Sometimes it feels like you're shouting into the void, wondering if there's still anyone out there listening—and it's not your imagination.

Stats say that organic reach, which is the number of folks seeing your post without you paying for ads, has plummeted by over 50% since 2015. Fast forward to 2023, and only around 13% of people on Instagram might catch a glimpse of your latest post. So, what's the game plan?

Email Marketing

Experts champion the potential of email marketing. Why? Because emails have the power to directly reach the inboxes of those already interested in what you're doing. Remember, they've willingly subscribed to your list! So, why email?

- **Personal Touch:** Emails can be tailored for targeted and personal communication
- **Higher Conversion Rates:** Emails are more likely to convert interest to sales.
- **Ownership:** You aren't at the mercy of "the algorithms." Emails are more likely to make it in front of your customers' eyes and be read.

- **Secure Backup:** We've all heard horror stories. Unlike social media, your email list is immune to account hijacking, securing your followers and portfolio.

Building Your Email List

First, you need to pick an email marketing tool. There are lots of options, including Mailchimp, Constant Contact, and I just switched to FloDesk. These platforms speed up creating newsletters, organizing subscribers, and tracking progress. Next, you'll need to add a sign-up form to your website. A simple form will do, but most experts recommend creating a "lead magnet" or a little gift in exchange for their email. You've seen these on other websites: "Sign up now to get our free guide on... (fill in the blank)". I've found that our demographic is typically quite interested in gardening and is always looking for tips on growing or arranging, so here are a few lead magnet ideas I might try:

- Three tips for making your bouquets last longer.
- How to make a quick and beautiful seasonal flower arrangement.
- My 5 favorite (fill in the blank) cool-season flowers to start now.
- Top 5 dahlia varieties for your cutting garden.

This may sound daunting, but it's easier than you think! There are many online tutorials, and your chosen email marketing platform will walk you through the process. Plus, they usually have many articles and videos on creating lead magnets, marketing emails and more.

Another way to collect emails is the old-fashioned clipboard. Wherever you're selling flowers, bring it along and ask people to sign up with their names and emails. And now, new technologies allow you to generate a QR code to put on posters, bouquet sleeves, etc. so people can scan it with their phone, and it will navigate them directly to a page where they can sign up for your list.

Engage Your Audience

As your email list grows, it's time to engage with your customers! Use your email list to build awareness of your business, increase sales, and get people to your website. While you want to use email to inform people about upcoming events or new sales outlets, you also want to ensure you're using it to build customer relationships. Authentic emails get more engagement, so don't be afraid to open up about your life as a flower farmer! Here are a few tips for writing impactful emails:

- **Simplicity is Key:** Address one topic per email.
- **Subject Lines Spark Curiosity:** Opt for short, compelling subject lines.
- **Keep it brief:** Given shrinking attention spans, write succinct content with links to a blog post for deeper dives.
- **Be Consistent:** Put it on your calendar and follow through with monthly (or more frequent if you can commit) updates.
- **Be Yourself:** Let your personality shine through; people long for human connection, not robotic tones.
- **Elicit Interaction:** Pose questions to spur engagement.
- **Be Persistent:** Construct a sequence of 3-4 emails for sales; studies show persistence pays.

Balancing Email and Social Media

But let's not ditch the Instagram account just yet! It's still the best way to show people the behind-the-scenes story. And now, social media is often the gateway for new customers to find you. It's about more than just scrolling; people hunt for businesses like they're searching Google. So, keep your page looking lively and current; it's a great way to showcase your portfolio and give people a glimpse of what's happening and blooming on your farm right now.

And one last thing: I'm writing this article to myself as much as I am to you! I have been growing our email list for years (that's why I just switched to FloDesk, unlimited subscribers for one price), but I've dropped the ball on being consistent with emails. So, I'm setting a goal this winter to practice what I preach. I'm going to keep it simple and shoot for a monthly newsletter. I'm also going to schedule the time for brainstorming and writing so I have some material "in the bank" for the busy times of the year. I can see that Instagram posts don't go as far as they used to, and every time I send a relationship-building email, I'm surprised at how many thoughtful responses I receive.

So what do you think—are you going to join me?! Let me know! I'm happy to be in touch and help keep each other accountable!



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Passing the Torch, and the Red Pen

Judy M. Laushman



Val Schirmer is generous in her message on page 4 about the transitions taking place between now and January 1, 2024. It's been a pleasure, both personally and professionally, to work with Val as ASCFG President for the last two years. She has unfailingly supported the organization and the ASCFG staff since she joined the Board.

As Val explains in her message, the search process for the incoming Executive Director is being coordinated by a professional human resources company with extensive experience with and knowledge of the ASCFG. After interviews of the final candidates with ASCFG Board members and staff, it's certain that an outstanding candidate will be chosen.

As is customary, I will not be part of this exercise, but thank everyone who has spent a considerable amount of time and energy on it, particularly John Dole. It's likely that John has participated in more search and hiring procedures than anyone we know, and he is uniquely qualified to chair the committee, given his long and invaluable tenure guiding the ASCFG. Especially the Cut Flower of the Year Program.

I look forward to learning the results of the search, and meeting the next ASCFG Executive Director. She or he will be privileged to work with the most outstanding Operations Director in the association world, Linda Twining, and will soon learn that although it's commonly said "No one is irreplaceable.", Linda truly is irreplaceable. Trust me.

Although Rebecca Marrall has been the ASCFG Education Director for only a year and a half, our partnership with her came together so quickly and seamlessly that it's hard to remember when she didn't work with us—until we remember the multitude of new programming she has developed and produced in that year and a half.

Most of you have not met in person our part-time office staff—Sherri Chavez and Emma Enos—but their work in membership management and bookkeeping keeps the office operating efficiently. Kelly Garcia's social media efforts ensure that the ASCFG has an effective and immediate presence.

Of all the hats I've worn in my 35 years with the ASCFG, that of editor of this magazine is probably my most treasured. Similar to the other projects I manage—the Cut Flower Trial Program, the Cut Flower of the Year, the Dave Dowling Scholarship, the ASCFG Research Foundation, Grower Grants, the Mentor Program, Board of Directors operations, conference management—I had no experience in producing

a periodical. I read (both past and present tenses of that verb) constantly, and fairly widely, but just because you travel on an airplane doesn't mean you can fly an airplane.

I would not have been able to create *The Cut Flower Quarterly* without the help of a cadre of people, including the first layout artists and printers in Friday Harbor, Washington; Eileen Svajger, a graphic director in Oberlin who took the publication from a newsletter to a true magazine; and Linda Twining, who taught herself WordPress and brought color and nuance to the issues.

Industry friends like Gay Smith, and academics Stanton Gill and Ray Cloyd contributed timely and useful articles. Countless Regional Directors produced a wide range of Regional Reports, and every ASCFG President added his or her thoughts through the years. The relatively recent inclusion of Julie Martens Forney as a features writer is one of my dreams come true. Thank you to everyone for providing such valuable content.

So, when it came to hiring my replacement as editor, I wanted to be sure that person was as much of a Grammar Queen (Ralph Cramer crowned me this early in his tenure on the Board.) as I am. Would the new editor be as picky about punctuation? Would scientific names of plants be written properly, and single quotation marks used for cultivar names, but not series? Would run-on sentences be trimmed to a reasonable size without changing the author's intended content? Would my treasured Oxford comma remain throughout the text?

I was delighted to discover that new editor Robin Siktberg and I are on the same page about all of this, and more. We could talk about plant nomenclature for hours. And even better, Robin won't be juggling projects like the Cut Flower of the Year at the same time she's producing the *Quarterly*, and can devote her considerable editorial and writing skills to expand the magazine beyond what I have been able.

Next year there may be changes to the magazine's look; Robin and graphic designer Amanda Nagengast are sure to find ways to update the style and increase content, while staying true to the ASCFG's goal: to connect and educate commercial cut flower growers. I look forward to watching these developments, and wish them the best in this partnership.

I'm grateful for your support for 35 years, and hope you will provide the new faces of the ASCFG the same.

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